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# THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

October 1996  
Vol. 50 No. 2



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# T H E B U L L E T I N

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**EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS**

*	Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R	Recommended.
Ad	Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M	Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR	Not recommended.
SpC	Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR	A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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THE BIG PICTURE

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*The Ghost of Nicholas Greebe*

by Tony Johnston; illustrated by S. D. Schindler

Pity poor old Nicholas Greebe: when he passes on, his troubles are just beginning. The fierceness of the colonial Massachusetts winter means that he's not buried quite deep enough: a little dog digs up his grave and takes one of his bones a-wandering, leaving Nicholas' ghost to haunt his old farm till his bones are reunited. His bone, however, has traveled farther than Nicholas ever did, and after a century of bringing bad luck to ships and sailors, it finally returns to the Greebe farm whereupon another dog, more obliging than the first, buries it in the appropriate spot.

Genuine ghost stories for this age level are rare. Older kids, who are putatively too old for Halloween, get all manner of bloodcurdling literary excitement sent their way all year 'round. True, we don't just want to hand the little ones Christopher Pike, but picture books for the hardcore trick-or-treat crowd, with their tendency to emphasize reassurance and entertainment, often paradoxically make the holiday less fun by insisting that fun is all it is. This picture book lets in the dark, the cold, and the unknown but makes them do its bidding, keeping everything masterfully under tonal control from start to finish.

Much of this comes from the book's delicate but distinct humor: the tale itself, with its canine hijinks and string of hapless victims, is poised between darkly sinister and darkly comedic, and there are quite a few linguistic turns that seem straightforward but contain amusing wordplay ("The old man gave up the ghost. That is to say, he died"). More often, however, the humor evinces itself in the combination of deadpan text and slightly teasing illustrations: the portentousness of "But that was not to be. For soon after, on a night ghostly with fog, the whaler struck an iceberg and sank like a stone" is undercut by the image that shows a complacent walrus eyeing a pool of Alka-Seltzer-esque fizz that marks the former location of the doomed ship.

The book never overplays the joke and forgets its genre, however; it revels in its classic trappings. The chilly winter moon, the flicker of candlelight, the clatter of fleeing carriages, the creak of the old iron graveyard gate—they're all here in the visuals, in the storytelling voice, and just in the atmosphere, even if they're not explicitly mentioned. Greebe is a fairly sympathetic shade, more sinned against than sinning, but he knows his ghostly business ("Sometimes something unseen set hens fluttering upon their nests. Sometimes something caused the lids of the kitchen stove to rise as if by levitation. Sometimes an unearthly wind whined in the corn"). His eerie chant ("From this night forth/ I quest, I quest,/ till all my bones/ together rest") and the occasional incantatory repetition of "The bone of Nicholas Greebe" will also help make this a pleasingly sonorous readaloud.

The illustrations are a key component of this restrained spookiness. Depending on extensive hatching and a multitude of precise lines on cool colors for their effects, they keep both the humor and the darker elements disciplined. Old man Greebe's ghost isn't overwhelmingly scary (and his skeleton seems quite elated by the return of its femur), but the busy dogs and motley partygoers don't chase all the chills away either. Shadows haunt the fields, and the cold steel-gray hue of the sky, the sea, and the frosted hills is reason enough for shivers even without a spectral presence. The landscape here is all early American, both in the colonial scenes with bewigged gentlemen and ladies in caps and the lush Victoriana of hurricane lamps and oriental rugs; Nathaniel Hawthorne and Washington Irving could be around any corner.

Endings are often a problem for ghost stories, since their usual goal is the eradication of the most interesting character. Old Nick's tale has a properly climactic finish, with the exultant apparition displaying a verve one suspects he never enjoyed in real life; it also has a nifty little fillip, both conceptually and artistically decorative, in the form of Greebe's altered headstone that now displays a bone-carrying dog in place of the angel it bore earlier. As well as being an ingenious mechanism of closure, this is, of course, incontrovertible proof of the truth of the tale, which makes it all the more delicious as well as all the more traditional. Read by flashlight to a costume-clad (or pajama-clad) storytime audience, this will be a hit with those youngsters with the nerve but not the stamina for Irving's headless horseman. (Imprint information appears on p. 65.)

*Deborah Stevenson, Assistant Editor*



## NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

AASENG, NATHAN *Genetics: Unlocking the Secrets of Life*. Oliver, 1996 [144p] illus. with photographs (Innovators)

ISBN 1-881508-27-7 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

This is not, as the title might suggest, an introduction to the principles of genetics but rather a history of major genetic discoveries and the scientists who made them. Starting with Charles Darwin and the theory of natural selection, proceeding through Thomas Hunt Morgan and his discovery of the chromosome, and ending with Har Gobind Khorana's creation of a synthetic gene, the book examines the significant genetic ideas they and four others introduced to the world. Genetics can be a fascinating field, and this clearly explains several key concepts as well as demonstrating how much progress has been made in understanding this field in such a short time; nor does Aaseng shy away from discussion of scientific politics and prejudice. The biographical information, however, often slows the narrative pace to a crawl, and strange extraneous tidbits appear in the marginal glosses (why do we need to hear about the birth of Abraham Lincoln just because he shared a

natal day with Charles Darwin?); occasionally those marginal explanations, which also appear in the glossary, are misleadingly phrased. Readers who seek the excitement of the chase should turn to Watson's classic *The Double Helix*, but this is a useful overview of the subject. Black-and-white photographs, along with several diagrams, appear throughout. DS

ARCHAMBAULT, JOHN *Grandmother's Garden*; illus. by Raúl Colón. Silver, 1996 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-382-39652-9 \$15.95

Trade ed. ISBN 0-382-39653-7 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

M 3-6 yrs

Using repetitive, rhyming text, Archambault creates a nostalgically idyllic garden peopled by hand-holding children from many cultures ("We are one, we are one./ In grandmother's garden, we are one./ Turning 'round the sun,/ We are one"). This paean to multicultural friendship and understanding is simplistically sentimental at best ("Different colors, different faces, different names./ Underneath our skin we are all the same") and is only partially redeemed by Colón's scratch-board and pastel illustrations. The children's faces are not particularly individualized as they drift through a golden haze, and large blossoms overwhelm the composition in several double-page spreads. While smiling children engage in horticultural activities ("It all starts from a tiny seed./ A little patch of earth is all we need./ Fresh river water or falling rain,/ A little bit of sunshine and lots of love./ A little bit of sunshine and lots of love"), the idea of the world as a culturally diverse garden is never fully developed. There is no tension or action in the text, and the end result is a series of visual and written images that fall flat on their good intentions. JMD

ARNOLD, CAROLINE *Bat*; illus. with photographs by Richard Hewett. Morrow, 1996 [48p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13727-X \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13726-1 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

*Fox*; illus. with photographs by Richard Hewett. Morrow, 1996 [48p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13729-6 \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13728-8 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

These two titles distill a lot of information into a compact size while leaving room for forty photos apiece. Arnold forthrightly defends her predator subjects by explaining how they help control pests such as rodents and insects. The jam-packed text offers intriguing information (rabid bats aren't violent, as "real vampire bats rarely attack people"; foxes' oversize ears not only help listen for prey but cool them off in hot climates) and anticipates kids' questions (yes, bats turn right side up for peeing and pooping). The biggest question of all about bats, however, is left unanswered (*why* their upside down lives); on the fox front, we are left wondering why the author takes us on a sidetrip to visit coyotes and wolves. Hewett's realistic photos make these references user-friendly for grade-schoolers. Both books would be solid additions to a nature collection; each contains an index. SSV

**BALGASSI, HAEMI** *Peacebound Trains*; illus. by Chris K. Soentpiet. Clarion, 1996 [48p]

ISBN 0-395-72093-1 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

Sumi sorely misses her widowed mother, who has recently joined the U.S. Army to earn money for her education and for the family's financial security. As the young girl sits on a hill overlooking the railroad, dreaming of the train that will bring her mother home, Harmuny (grandmother) recounts for her the story of how she and Harabujy (grandfather) abandoned their home during the North Korean invasion of 1950. Harmuny, then a young wife, parted forever from Harabujy as a train took her and her two children to safety in Pusan and her husband joined the South Korean army. Although this seems a strange tale with which to comfort a child who anxiously awaits her mother's return from military service, it does provide exciting fare for readers who are not yet old enough for Watkins' moving *So Far from the Bamboo Grove* (BCCB 6/86). The compelling core of the novel, however, is sandwiched between chapters of narrative addenda in Sumi's distinctly un-child-like voice ("I press Umma's doll over my heart and listen as the wind scatters the last wistful echoes of the train whistle up to the twilight sky"). Soentpiet's portraiture, which fills nearly every double spread, masterfully captures the young Korean family in the best and worst of times, sharing a meal on the floor of their graciously appointed home and trying to "memorize each other's eyes" at the train depot. A concluding note provides brief information on the Korean invasion, and a glossary of Korean terms is included. EB

**BARROWS, ALLISON** *The Artist's Model*; written and illus. by Allison Barrows. Carolrhoda, 1996 32p

ISBN 0-87614-948-4 \$14.96

Ad Gr. 2-4

A young girl relates her experience as an artist's model. The artist is her father, and she is to be the child princess on the illustrated cover of a fantasy novel. In comfortable language that communicates her excitement at the course of events, she leads the reader from costuming to photography session, from the draft illustration to the finished painting. Our narrator concludes, "When I grow up, I want to be an artist just like my father. I think I'll start practicing now." The step-by-step text is strongly supported by the step-by-step art, each half- and full-page picture documenting the sequential process—bookmaking—of which this cover illustration is just one stage. The book unfortunately never addresses methodologies other than the father's technique of working from photographs projected onto backgrounds, and there's a glaring anachronism in an illustration that shows a worker binding books by hand. Barrow's '50s-cartoon-style watercolors are still effective, even with the narrator's ever-wide eyes, and the combination of actual black-and-white photographs (contact sheets) with original art anchors the events in reality. JMD

**BERNHARD, EMERY** *Happy New Year*; illus. by Durga Bernhard. Lodestar, 1996 32p

ISBN 0-525-67532-9 \$14.99

Ad Gr. 2-4

This survey of New Year's celebrations around the world is replete with sound-bites of information about parties past and present. Skipping from culture to

culture, from time frame to time frame, Bernhard gives a paragraph at most on celebrations and customs from various locales. From the ancient Romans to the American West, from the Ibo to the Iroquois, the reader learns why noisemaking is an element in Balinese New Year's celebrations, why Southeast Asians throw bowls of water over statues of Buddha and each other, and why on Rosh Hashanah Jewish families traditionally eat apples dipped in honey. Durga Bernhard's non-descript watercolors are full of generically laughing celebrants in various celebratory regalia. There is a short glossary, but no notes, sources or references are given. JMD

BEST, CARI *Getting Used to Harry*; illus. by Diane Palmisciano. Kroupa/Orchard, 1996 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08794-8 \$16.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09494-4 \$15.95

R 5-8 yrs

Cynthia's mother, Inky, has just gotten married; there's "music and dancing and kissing and hugging and laughing and crying," and as the happy groom, Harry, observes, "Isn't love the berries!" The newlyweds return from their honeymoon all ditzzy and dewy-eyed, and now Cynthia finds that the old mother-daughter routines have been up-ended, Harry is perpetually underfoot, and it's hard to share Inky's enthusiasm for this balding shoe-store owner with an abysmal fashion sense. But when Harry takes Cynthia on a flashlight prowl through town in the dead of night, pausing along the way to play a game of marbles and discuss some shoe-store window-dressing, Cynthia realizes that life in her reconstructed household might just be fun after all. Best spins her yarn a little longer than strictly necessary, but Cynthia's narration is a nice combination of sulky and snappy, and Palmisciano's oil-pastel caricatures poke some good-natured fun at a houseful of emotions run rampant. While this is undeniably a thinly veiled reassurance to new stepkids, it's delivered with a goofy sweetness that makes the lesson go down easy. EB

BLOCK, FRANCESCA LIA *Girl Goddess #9: Nine Stories*. HarperCollins, 1996 [224p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027212-0 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-027211-2 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 9-12

Poetic and sensual language distinguishes this collection of nine stories about pre- and post-adolescent females and their coming to grips—or not—with the world: La seeks acceptance by her peers and her father after the suicide of her thwarted poet mother in "Blue"; Tuck Budd discovers the truth, or at least the facts, of her two mothers' histories in "Dragons in Manhattan"; and in "Rave," the only story with a male narrator, an unnamed teenage boy relates the short, sad life of a rock groupie named Raven. Block's ripe imagery ("The wall was covered with passionflower vines—passionflowers like weird sea creatures that would close up around your fingers if you touched them and bright-orange, bursting passionflower fruits") carries the reader over any awkward construction or plot eccentricities. Reading Block requires a certain suspension of disbelief as the world she writes about is often a fantastical one, the settings surreal in their atmospherics, but her characters fight against spiritual annihilation by groping toward creative expression with a purity of purpose and inherent emotionality that is remarkably moving. JMD



**BRADFORD, KARLEEN** *There Will Be Wolves*. Lodestar, 1996 [195p]  
 ISBN 0-525-67539-6 \$15.99 Ad Gr. 7-10

Ursula is unusual: her father, flying in the face of eleventh-century convention, has taught her his apothecary's skill and trade, so that she too claims a role as a healer. This eventually leads to a charge of witchcraft against her, and her only way of escaping punishment is to travel from her German home to Constantinople with the People's Crusade. Like her friend Bruno, Ursula has strong reservations about the merits of such a venture; while those reservations are borne out, she also finds treasure in places she didn't expect. First published in Canada in 1992, this is an uneven blend of romantic contemporary sensibility and historical accuracy. Ursula is a very modern heroine, whose actions (such as lecturing a woman into taking her child and leaving her abusive boyfriend, and religiously taking baths) and capabilities are often anachronistic, and the plot, including the love story between Ursula and Bruno, takes several exceedingly melodramatic turns. Bradford is excellent, however, at evoking the grim realities of a pilgrimage and the pragmatic obstacles such a project encounters, as well as the various currents of social unrest. This is soapier and often less authentic than Frances Temple's *The Ramsay Scallop* (BCCB 4/96), but it's still a dramatic picture of an engaging heroine in a difficult time. DS

**BRANDENBURG, JIM** *Scruffy: A Wolf Finds His Place in the Pack*; edited by JoAnn Bren Guernsey; written and illus. with photographs by Jim Brandenburg. Walker, 1996 [32p]  
 Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8446-1 \$16.85  
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8445-3 \$15.95  
 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 2-4

Adolescence is a trial regardless of species, as Brandenburg shows with his candid shots of a wolf pack on Ellesmere Island in the Arctic Circle. There a yearling wolf, dubbed Scruffy due to his appearance, struggles to find a role in the pack, finally settling on nanny to a new litter of pups. Who'd've thunk it, given our stereotype of wolves as big and bad, but there it is—Scruffy guarding the den, walking the pups, playing tug-of-war, showing them how to attack and kill, teaching them their own place in the lupine order. A return trip the following spring reveals that Scruffy has again taken on the main caregiver role in the pack—not the fast track to alpha status, to be sure, but valued nevertheless. Brandenburg's photos are warm without being sentimental and the text direct and informative. The narrative pulls the material together reasonably well, albeit in a rather anthropomorphic "based-on-the-movie" fashion. This isn't quite up to Brandenburg's usual standards, but it's useful as an involving read about arctic wolves. SSV

**CALVERT, PATRICIA** *Glennis, Before and After*. Atheneum, 1996 [150p]  
 ISBN 0-689-80641-8 \$16.00 R Gr. 5-7

Twelve-year-old Glennis is the middle child of five, taken for granted and taking for granted her family's well-off lifestyle until her father goes to prison for bank fraud. Now her mother is in a convalescent home with a nervous breakdown and the kids have been scattered among the extended family, with Glennis choosing eccentric Aunt Wanda in order to stay in visiting proximity to her father's prison. She is shocked, however, when her father, whom she had believed innocent, con-

fesses his crime to her, and she struggles to understand this new life that is never going to resemble her old one. Glennis' earnest narration is compelling and straightforward ("My father was a convict now. Which made me a convict's daughter") but also believable in its ambivalence, anger, and shame. Characterization is quietly strong throughout, with Glennis' weary father, her hardworking, loud-dressing aunt, and her frail little cousin Skipper escaping the stereotypes into which they might easily have fallen. Parental imprisonment has been treated in a few other recent novels (Marcia Byalick's *It's a Matter of Trust*, BCCB 1/96, and Sally Warner's *Dog Years*, 5/95), but this is the tenderest and least glossy portrayal of its effects. DS

CARLSTROM, NANCY WHITE *Let's Count It Out, Jesse Bear*; illus. by Bruce Degen. Simon, 1996 [32p]  
ISBN 0-689-80478-4 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

M 3-6 yrs

Jesse Bear (from *What Will You Wear, Jesse Bear?*, BCCB 5/86, etc.) is back and this time he's very busy counting, rhyming, adding, and even spelling out numbers. Although cheerfully illustrated, this counting book, with its tedious rhymes and cluttered layout, attempts to do too much so that by number four it isn't fun anymore. The confusion begins with number one: "None and one more is 1. One is fun!" What happened to zero? Problems continue to add up: in number four, bumper cars "roar"; in number six, a shovel is a "stick for dumping"; in number seven there are "stars in the tree." Even young listeners may argue that bumper cars don't roar, a shovel is not really a stick, and stars are in the sky, not the tree. Oh, and if you do get to number sixteen be sure to count both horns on the bighorn sheep and the single horn on the rhinoceros, which float amid a sea of musical instruments . . . you're counting horns, okay? Counting books need a certain clear functionality in order to be useful; despite Degen's friendly watercolor illustrations showing Jesse Bear enjoying family and friends you will probably want to count this one out. PM

CLEMENTS, ANDREW *Frindle*; illus. by Brian Selznick. Simon, 1996 [112p]  
ISBN 0-689-80669-8 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Nick is bright and imaginative and occasionally trouble-making, and come fifth grade he makes a particularly inventive kind of trouble. When his teacher, Miss Granger, explains that popular usage determines a word's entry into the dictionary ("We decide what goes in that book"), he mischievously takes her literally and begins a covert campaign for a new word: frindle. "Frindle" is a synonym for "pen," and the kids in Nick's class abet him by using the word at all their many opportunities, until administrative displeasure escalates the matter into an all-out linguistic war, the story of which is picked up by journalists across the country. This is a refreshingly original plot whose combination of clandestine revolt and language-arts lesson is surprisingly successful. The action is sometimes too adult-driven, and the peripheral characters are easy to lose track of, but Clements keeps the narrative kid-accessible and the tussle with authority gleeful despite its restraint. It's all wildly unlikely, and this doesn't have the real faith in kids' troublemaking power evinced by Cynthia Voigt's *Bad Girls* (BCCB 4/96), but it's a highly readable story of a kid's changing, if not the world, at least what we call a part of it.

Occasional black-and-white illustrations and diagrams have a slight suggestion of archness that lifts them above the mundane. DS

COLE, JOANNA *The Magic School Bus Inside a Beehive*; illus. by Bruce Degen. Scholastic, 1996 [48p]

ISBN 0-590-44684-3 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

The eighth in The Magic School Bus series (*The Magic School Bus Inside a Hurricane*, BCCB 10/95, etc.) buzzes with activity. Cole's accessible language combined with Degen's appealing cartoon illustrations cannot help but succeed. The topic this time is honeybees: how they make honey, what it's like inside the hive, the various roles assigned to the occupants of the bee community, and just a trace of danger for the adventuring bee-sized students when a hungry bear comes looking for something sweet to eat. For format's sake, the life cycle of the bees—workers, drones, and queens—takes place in an afternoon, but the "afternotes" explain that the time frame is longer in real life. Humorous dialogue balloons and info-bytes supplement the more conventionally arranged text, along with excerpts from students' science reports. Ms. Frizzle's costume in the final illustration shows dogs, lambs, and pigs. Next stop: the farm? JMD

CONRAD, PAM *Zoe Rising*. Geringer/HarperCollins, 1996 131p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-027218-X \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-02717-1 \$13.95

Ad Gr. 6-9

One wouldn't have thought that *Stonewords* (BCCB 5/90) needed to or even *could* have a sequel, but here is one nonetheless. Zoe is now fourteen and enjoying a summer away at camp with her best friend, Jedidiah, when she begins to slip through time again. This time she goes back to her mother's childhood, seeing how the happy, trusting child changed, as a result of one terrible incident, into the woman whose instability makes her unable to commit to Zoe as a parent. Zoe determines to alter the past and therefore the present, but finds that doing so endangers herself as well. This story has neither the relentlessness nor the believability of its predecessor; the mechanics of Zoe's travel are more labored, the dangers of the past (Zoe's mother is abducted by a sinister neighbor) are melodramatic, and Zoe's manipulation of the present via the past is implausibly depicted. Conrad is still a smooth and poetic writer, however, and Zoe's troubles with the dichotomy of then and now are vividly portrayed. DS

COTTRINGER, ANNE *Ella and the Naughty Lion*; illus. by Russell Ayto. Lorraine/Houghton, 1996 [26p]

ISBN 0-395-79753-5 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 3-5 yrs

"The day Ella's mother came home with baby Jasper, a lion slipped in through the door." This lion acts out all the mean, sibling-hating feelings of first-born Ella, roaring, tearing up teddy bears, being really evil in the supermarket—until Ella saves her baby brother from a bad fall and takes her rightful place as older sister and heroic guardian. Cottringer's text has a great readaloud rhythm, and her accurate expressions of Ella's obvious jealousy make this more than just "new baby" bibliotherapy. Ayto's watercolors are buoyant and appealing, the combination of vignettes, single, and double-page spreads adding to the overall composition and

appeal; the style is heavily influenced by Maurice Sendak, right down to the subdued yet effective palette. The ending—wherein Ella saves Jasper from a runaway carriage—is reminiscent of McPhail's *Pig Pig Grows Up*, but Ella's story is nonetheless effective and satisfying. JMD

CREECH, SHARON *Pleasing the Ghost*. HarperCollins, 1996 [128p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-026986-3 \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-026985-5 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

Dennis is nine, and he's unusually popular with ghosts: though other people seem unable to see the spooks, they come to him at night on the wind. The most significant ghostly visitor is Dennis' Uncle Arvie, who enlists Dennis in a scheme to thwart Arvie's widow's incipient relationship with another man, but Dennis keeps hoping that his own late father will ride the ghost wind one night and return. The relentless breeziness, Uncle Arvie's funny speech (he had a stroke several years before he died, and even as a ghost is Mr. Malaprop), and the predictability of Dennis' rapprochement with the bereaved bully who has also lost his dad unfortunately prevent things from ever moving out of the shallows. Younger readers, however, will appreciate the book's cheerful air and the entertaining but non-spooky ghost plot with its emotional overtones. DS

CUMMINS, JULIE *The Inside-Outside Book of Libraries*; illus. by Roxie Munro. Dutton, 1996 48p

ISBN 0-525-45608-2 \$15.99

R 5-9 yrs

Cummins takes her audience on a tour of several United States libraries that, together, demonstrate the breadth of library services available to patrons, even those in remote places or with special needs. First stop is New York's Chatham Square Library, which serves the populace of Chinatown with bilingual materials; next comes Ocracoke Library, a weathered, one-room building on a North Carolina sea island accessible only by ferry or plane. A private research library, a library aboard a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, a prison library, a library for the blind and physically handicapped, a tool-lending library, and a virtual library are featured along the way, with final stops at the familiar (we hope) school library and home collection. A Braille passage securely attached to the page and translated in an insert is a thoughtful added touch. Each site receives two double spreads and a description of the collection specialty and the clientele it serves. Large, close-up paintings put the viewer squarely into each scene for a look around, but crowded composition and garish coloring create a claustrophobic rather than an inviting ambiance. Still, this title reminds listeners that libraries, like the literature and information they house, come in many packages. EB

CURLEE, LYNN *Ships of the Air*; written and illus. by Lynn Curlee. Houghton, 1996 [32p]

ISBN 0-395-69338-1 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-5

As interest in lighter-than-air travel revives with the proliferation of hot-air balloon rallies and tours, children may be surprised to learn that these bulbous affairs once served as scientific research vessels, World War I bombers, and airborne luxury liners. Curlee relates the development of these craft from the eighteenth-century

experiments of the Montgolfier brothers through the disasters among the 1930s dirigibles, which put an end to their commercial use. Supporting science background is smoothly integrated within the historical narrative; the invention of lighter engines, the substitution of hydrogen for hot air and helium for hydrogen, and the introduction of aluminum frames are all presented as solutions to problems rather than mini-physics lessons. Curlee recognizes kids' fascination with failures and includes a wealth of details such as French villagers who in 1766 "thought the balloon was a monster, and destroyed it with their pitchforks" and the ice-laden *Italia* which crashed in the Arctic, spilling out most of its crew, only to rise suddenly and leave them marooned. Single and double-spread paintings use a streamlined realism to present the airships, eerie and majestic as they dwarf the landscapes over which they hover. Although aerialist Jean-Pierre Blanchard does not make an appearance here, older listeners who were intrigued by his exploits in Alexandra Wallner's *The First Air Voyage in the United States* (BCCB 5/96) should find this title to be just the ticket for a longer flight. EB

DANZIGER, PAULA *Amber Brown Wants Extra Credit*; illus. by Tony Ross. Putnam, 1996 120p  
ISBN 0-399-22900-0 \$13.95

Ad Gr. 4-6

Amber (familiar from *Amber Brown Goes Fourth*, BCCB 11/95, etc.) is having a rough time after her parents' divorce: her new teacher wants her homework and she wants it on time, her father is in Paris with a new girlfriend and *her* child, and her mother has a new boyfriend, "gorilla face" Max. Danziger's light touch keeps it all in humorous perspective without condescending to new fifth-grader Amber, who is having difficulty coping with the revelation that life is not fair. Characterizations are concise and cogent, with caring parents and teachers engaging in believable dialogue with only somewhat precocious children. There's a lot of how-I'm-feeling-about-all-this-stuff going on in place of a compelling plot, but Danziger does a good job at making the old adjustment to the divorce story palatable. Ross' pen-and-ink drawings, scattered throughout the text, are cheerfully emotive and lend a scampy tone to the story's characterizations. Amber is a likable, credible character and series fans will be happy with her adjustment to real life. JMD

DEFELICE, CYNTHIA *The Apprenticeship of Lucas Whitaker*. Farrar, 1996 [160p]  
ISBN 0-374-34669-0 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Unable to manage the family farm alone after his last remaining relative dies of consumption, twelve-year-old Lucas finds work with a village doctor, Uriah Beecher. Lucas ably assists with tooth pullings, barbering, and amputations, winning the respect of both employer and patients. However, when consumption creeps among the community and Doc Beecher is unwilling to offer a certain remedy, Lucas defies the doctor and assists ailing neighbors with a grisly folk "cure" based on the belief that persons who previously succumbed to the disease now prey, vampire-like, on living relatives. Lucas defends his efforts to the doctor, convincingly comparing the cannibalistic aspects of the ritual with Beecher's own practice of inoculation, but he soon learns why the doctor correctly doubts the long-term efficacy of the gruesome "cure." Although the exhumation scenes are memorable (and literally heart-wrenching), DeFelice treats the distraught families' desperate actions with sympathy and respect. The state of mid-nineteenth-century medi-



cine, in which the ministrations of trained practitioners were often as ineffective as superstitious self-doctoring, is skillfully conveyed. A foreword and afterword discuss the "macabre 'cure' for consumption . . . practiced in rural New England in the nineteenth century" and reasons for the spread of tuberculosis. EB

DEMATONS, CHARLOTTE *Looking For Cinderella*; written and illus. by Charlotte Dematons; tr. and ad. by Leigh Sauerwein. Front Street, 1996 26p  
ISBN 1-886910-13-8 \$15.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

Off investigating a mysterious windmill, Hilda encounters characters from traditional Western European folk and fairy tales who consistently mistake her for Cinderella. Red Riding Hood brings her to the prince, a witch engages her to search for her cat, Hansel and Gretel give her gingerbread baked by Snow White, she races a giant with Tom Thumb—and she finally finds Cinderella scrubbing a remarkably clean attic. This slight but appealing story is illustrated by restrained watercolors that lend a certain realistic air to the proceedings. Double and single-paged spreads combine with illustrative vignettes to visually carry the action from one scene to the next. Dematons' watercolors work best when pastoral and panoramic, and the extended horizons showing castles with banners flourishing in the distance contribute to the fairy-tale atmosphere. The faces lack personality, and the characters (except for Hilda and that hoodlum, Tom Thumb) are flatly two-dimensional, momentarily out of sync with the stories they presumably re-enact on some sort of fantasy continuum. The occasional inconsistency won't bother anyone who's caught up in the idea of a gateway to world populated with favorite fairy-tale folk, however, and children familiar with the old tales will enjoy finding and seeking as Hilda wends her way home. JMD

DENENBERG, BARRY *When Will This Cruel War Be Over?: The Civil War Diary of Emma Simpson*. Scholastic, 1996 156p illus. with photographs (Dear America)  
ISBN 0-590-22862-5 \$9.95 Ad Gr. 5-7

GREGORY, KRISTIANA *The Winter of Red Snow: The Revolutionary War Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart*. Scholastic, 1996 173p illus. with photographs (Dear America)  
ISBN 0-590-22653-3 \$9.95 Ad Gr. 5-7

LASKY, KATHRYN *A Journey to the New World: The Diary of Remember Patience Whipple*. Scholastic, 1996 173p illus. with photographs (Dear America)  
ISBN 0-590-50214-X \$9.95 R Gr. 5-7

Scholastic unveils a new series geared toward the same audience as Aladdin Paperback's American Diaries (see review under Duey, BCCB 5/96), but here the draw is fictionalized diaries of real young women who actually experienced major events in America's past. Lasky's journal of Mayflower voyager Patience Whipple is the strongest entry, possessing authenticity and immediacy; the young teen comments in a wry voice about her neighbors ("Air Nose" Mary Chilton, who cheats to be the first to set foot on the landing rock at Plimoth) and longs to confirm rumors about the half-clothed natives ("Where exactly do they wear their feathers?"). Abigail Stewart, Gregory's eleven-year-old diarist in *The Winter of Red Snow*, speaks more as witness to than participant in events surrounding Washington's encampment at Valley Forge. As Revolutionary bigwigs pass through her neighborhood, Abigail offers a confused portrait of the General and his wife—

pious and extraordinarily generous toward the locals and wounded soldiers, yet evidently living high on the hog while the enlisted men starve. Denenberg's subject, fifteen-year-old Confederate Emma Simpson, evinces tantalizingly complex views on slavery (she boasts of the loyalty of their well-treated slaves, yet admits "We live with them but we know so little about them . . . they are one way with us and another with their own color"). However, her outlook tends toward the maudlin and melodramatic, and her manner of expression is more forced ("How could I know it would be the last Christmas we would all celebrate together? 1863 was the most dismal year of my life"). All titles evidence the Procrustean strain of fitting historical details, unremarkable to those who witnessed them, into a diary, as complete letters are copied into a journal (Denenberg), recipes are jotted down for no compelling reason (Gregory), and a child too sick to move nonetheless writes flowingly in her journal (Lasky). Although all entries boast extensive and entertaining background notes on the period examined, none gives the specific sources from which facts on the girls' lives were culled. EB

DUQUENNOY, JACQUES *The Ghosts' Trip to Loch Ness*; written and illus. by Jacques Duquennoy; tr. by Kathryn Nanovic. Harcourt, 1996 49p  
ISBN 0-15-201440-3 \$11.00 Ad 5-8 yrs

The ghosts have dined (*The Ghosts' Dinner*, BCCB 12/94), and now it's time for them to go on vacation—to where else but Loch Ness, in an attempt to see the famous monster. They appreciate the company of the hospitable MacGhost, they enjoy their fishing ("There's nothing wrong with a little fishing while you're waiting for a monster to come along"), and they relish taking some vacation snapshots, but they don't see Nessie. The reader will, however, since the cheerful green sea-serpent pops up time after time just when the ghosts aren't looking, as the ghosts realize when they get their photos developed. This isn't as cohesive as the previous book, and it rambles on a bit, but the wide-eyed and innocent sweetness remains and gives the book an endearing charm. The line-and-watercolor art is simple without being cartoony, showing classic sheet-over-the-head ghosts whipping through Scotland (filled with thistles and Scottish terriers) in their red Citroën, peering through the gloom in search of the elusive monster, and contentedly having a lochside snooze under the golden crescent moon. Gentle without being prissy, this will appeal to kids who like a nice safe adventure. DS

DURRANT, LYNDA *Echohawk*. Clarion, 1996 [192p]  
ISBN 0-395-74430-X \$14.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 6-8

Jonathan is four years old in 1738 when the Mohicans raid his home, carrying him off and killing his family. Eight years later, Jonathan is Echohawk, son of Glickihigan and older brother to Bamaineo. The twist in this coming of age novel is that the adolescent coming of age is a white boy adopted into one Indian clan but not accepted by others. Echohawk is aware that he is white, but he does not pursue his origins with any particular intensity. In the end he "remembers" the death of his family, forgives his Mohican father, and follows him into the wilderness in what the reader knows is a hopeless effort to escape the encroaching white man. The uncohesive plot acts primarily as a vehicle for cultural information, with the less-than-three-dimensional characters embodying certain desirable, plot-enhancing traits rather than standing on their own. As a result, there is little to involve the reader emotionally. A list of sources, a glossary, and an afterword are included. JMD

ERICSSON, JENNIFER A. *The Most Beautiful Kid in the World*; illus. by Susan Meddaugh. Tambourine, 1996 [32p]  
 Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13942-6 \$15.93  
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13941-8 \$16.00 R 4-8 yrs

Annie is dressed in her best clothes, courtesy of her mother. Her shoes pinch, her tights droop, and the tag on the back of her dress itches, and "Grandma is coming for dinner tonight. I want to be beautiful—the most beautiful kid in the world!" Off she goes, donning flowered long underwear, a frothy tutu, her father's bedroom slippers, and peanut-butter lipstick—resulting in a gaudy vision of loveliness topped only by Grandma herself. Ericsson's text maintains a frenetic kid-like momentum as Annie gleefully accessorizes, avoiding her mother's scrutiny at every turn: "A squirt of perfume. Sparkling earrings. A long string of pearls. And Daddy's favorite slippers. Yes!" Young children familiar with the desire to make their own sartorial statement will delight in (and be inspired by) Annie's successful subversion of her mother's more conservative fashion sense. Meddaugh's exuberant cartoons show Annie in all her glory as she races around the house acquiring each piece of her unique ensemble. Finally, "I grab the knob and fling the door open. 'Happy Birthday, Grandma!'" And Grandma, in purple pants with black paw prints, boots, and a fringed cowboy shirt "opens her arms wide. 'Why, you're the most beautiful kid in the world!'" And she is, too. JMD

FAIN, MOIRA *Snow Day*; written and illus. by Moira Fain. Walker, 1996 32p  
 Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8410-0 \$16.85  
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8409-7 \$15.95 Ad 5-7 yrs

Maggie Murphy ("the most clever student in Sister Agatha Ann's class") runs afoul of her instructress ("the toughest teacher in the whole school") when she gets caught drawing pictures and marking up the desk instead of paying attention to her lesson. Furthermore, she spends the evening in a pillow fight with her siblings rather than writing her punishment, a poem to be delivered to the entire class. A winter storm grants her a reprieve—the next day is a snow day, and Maggie goes sledding with her brothers and sisters, only to find Sister Agatha Ann and the other teachers waiting at the hill to climb aboard their students' sleds for a race. A discreet hint from Sister shows Maggie how words can paint a picture as aptly as chalk and crayons, and the errant student is ready with her poem for the class the next day. Maggie never seems concerned enough about her predicament to bring a sense a tension to the upbeat tale, and although snowy hills and storm-clouded skies show to advantage in Fain's paintings, human figures are awkwardly rendered, with expressive faces on lumpy, ill-defined bodies. Adult veterans of '60s parochial education will probably get the biggest kick from this; pity the child listeners who will be in for tales of a time when kids were startled to discover that "Sister" knew how to have fun, and when no *real* Agatha Ann would have tolerated her students' poor posture or failed to catch them passing notes. EB

FRANKLIN, KRISTINE L. *Nerd No More*. Candlewick, 1996 143p  
 ISBN 1-56402-674-4 \$15.99 R Gr. 4-6

Wiggie was leading a normal sixth-grade life for awhile, but now his mother's the star of an educational science program and new classmate Eddie, noting Wiggie's scholarly capabilities, has loudly decided that Mrs. Science's son is a grade-A nerd ("It's not like I'm the only smart kid in the world, but the combination of being

smart and having a TV scientist mom who talks about bowels had pushed me over the edge"). Wiggie attempts to disprove this theorem by changing his image (a dismal failure) and being one of the guys (which means he capitalizes on an unintentional meanness to a friendly nerdy girl). A science field trip (with Wiggie's mother, to boot) brings things to a head when a chain of foolishness, bravado, and accident results in a broken arm, but also in Wiggie's intelligence and social status coexisting peacefully. The plot of plummeting popularity and the be-yourself message aren't new, but Franklin makes the story fresh with sharp writing, zesty dialogue, and effective characterization. Classroom dynamics are a strong point here: Eddie's obnoxiousness is genuinely funny as well as mean (his nickname for Wiggie, picking up on one of his mother's televised phrases, is "Bowel Boy"), and the drifting of Wiggie's former best friend in Eddie's direction is both credible and understandable. Wiggie's travails are deftly portrayed and humorous; fans of Ilene Cooper and Louis Sachar will appreciate them. DS

FRIEDEN, SARAJO *The Care and Feeding of Fish*; written and illus. by Sarajo Frieden. Houghton, 1996 32p

ISBN 0-395-71251-3 \$15.95

R 6-9 yrs

Lou Lou longs for adventure, and she gets her wish with the arrival of her seventh birthday present from her world travelling Aunt Eclair. By following her aunt's instructions, Lou Lou molds the large and unusual fish, eventually named Harold, into a perfect companion: strolling in the park, dancing in ballet class, even shopping for formal wear. But Harold, inspired to pursue his passion to be an opera singer, grows away from Lou Lou. After a fond dockside farewell, Lou Lou returns home to her new fish, a present from Harold. Frieden's text combines an outrageous premise with surreal illustrations, the end result being a happy combination of animal fantasy and growing-pain pathos. Gouache illustrations, heavy on the primary colors and reminiscent of Maira Kalman, are full of telling details, puns, and humor, lending a jolly *esprit de corps* to the proceedings. Primary and middle graders will appreciate the humor of the situation while recognizing that even finny friends can't stay forever. JMD

GAFFNEY, TIMOTHY R. *Grandpa Takes Me to the Moon*; illus. by Barry Root. Tambourine, 1996 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13938-8 \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13937-X \$16.00

R 5-8 yrs

Gaffney's story, of a grandfather who walked on the moon and his grandson who imagines returning there with him, begins at the beginning: "To get to the moon, we go to Florida first. That's where the rocket is." The story is familiar to adults, but kids raised in the space-shuttle era will be fascinated to learn about moon landers, lunar rovers, and returning capsules parachuting into the ocean. In a note, Gaffney reveals that his inspiration for the story came from the death of James Irwin of Apollo 15 and the realization that the personal stories of these astronauts are dying with them. Root's watercolor and gouache art conveys the rich blackness of space and the harsh environment of the moon, effectively contrasting that with the lush tropical setting of Florida. Despite a somewhat jerky ending (blasting off from the moon on one page and returning to earth on the next), Gaffney delivers the right stuff. SSV

GAY, KATHLYN *Saving the Environment: Debating the Costs.* Watts, 1996 128p  
ISBN 0-531-11263-2 \$22.00 Ad Gr. 9-12

Gay takes a side in this debate early: "Earth is the home of many creatures, among them humans, who are only a small part of the whole, and there is a need to balance this fact with people's economic concerns." Well, who's to argue, really, but it's difficult to claim an even-handed approach when many of the sources cited are press releases from environmental organizations such as Greenpeace and the National Resources Defense Council. There is a lot of useful information here: we learn that other industrialized countries have environmental regulations three or four times as stringent as the U.S.; many of the technologies used to clean things up originally were developed in the U.S. but have found more receptive markets abroad; the area in the American West overseen by the Bureau of Land Management is as big as New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, and West Virginia combined. Few, however, will be the stalwart souls persistent enough to mine such nuggets from the earnest prose. Included are two appendices—"World Scientists' Warning to Humanity" and, oddly enough, the complete text of the North American Free Trade Agreement—source notes, suggestions for further reading, and an index. SSV

GIFF, PATRICIA REILLY *Good Luck, Ronald Morgan!*; illus. by Susanna Natti. Viking, 1996 32p  
ISBN 0-670-86303-3 \$13.99 R Gr. 1-3

A hot, sticky, best-friendless summer is not so easily overcome. But Ronald Morgan is optimistic: he has his happy-go-lucky birthday pup (from *Happy Birthday, Ronald Morgan!*), named Lucky, of course; a book on how to "Train Your Pet"; and potential friends, Kelly and her cat, Tiger, emerging from the moving van next door. The animal pandemonium that thwarts his initial attempts to befriend Kelly lulls just enough (over a picnic lunch of peanut butter) to declare a hasty comradeship and return to the more immediate matter of pet training. Ronald Morgan is his own straight man in this easy reader, with Natti's cartoon-but-not-caricature illustrations providing the punch to many of his lines. Lucky's hole-digging, book-chewing, cat-chasing antics provide comic counterpoint to the training manual passages Ronald Morgan dutifully reads aloud ("Some dogs can do tricks or swim. . . . Every animal is good at something, and that's the important thing"). Earnest and bespectacled, Ronald Morgan is much less of a Charlie Brown in this series installment. Young readers will think themselves lucky to find this fortunately engaging sequel. Good luck, Ronald Morgan, indeed! AEB

GOLLUB, MATTHEW *Uncle Snake*; illus. by Leovigildo Martinez. Tambourine, 1996 [32p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13945-0 \$15.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13944-2 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 3-6

"Long ago, before there was lightning," a fearless young boy enters a forbidden cave and finds snakes with the heads of humans. He runs home, only to discover that he has the head of a snake. His father takes him from *curandero* to *curandero*, but no one can help. A *nahual* (shape-changing worker of magic) gives him a mask to wear; after twenty years he takes off the mask, turns into a snake with a human head, and leaps into the sky, becoming the first lightning. Black-and-



white borders surround the moodily effective watercolors and are echoed by the white text on a black background. Oversized figures are balanced by strong diagonals and by realistic elements juxtaposed against magical ones and seamlessly integrated into the composition (i.e., the *nahual* floats in a tree as the snake-headed boy and his father stand on bare, work-hardened feet in a suggested rather than detailed landscape). This original tale is inspired by an ancient Oaxacan belief that a snake in the sky (lightning) brings about heavy rains. Martinez' watercolors have the same powerful impact as in his first collaboration with Gollub (*Twenty-Five Mixtec Cats*), but Gollub's text here lacks the internal logic of that more traditionally structured tale, the plethora of plot elements seemingly forced into a choppy sequence of events. An author's explanatory note about Oaxacan culture is included. JMD

GOODMAN, SUSAN E. *The Great Antler Auction*; illus. with photographs by Michael J. Doolittle. Atheneum, 1996 [40p]  
ISBN 0-689-80131-9 \$16.00  
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 3-5

The Boy Scouts of Jackson, Wyoming, perform the usual good deeds one expects, but with an original and distinctly local touch—they search the surrounding area for elk antlers shed after the spring mating season. These treasures are then sold at auction, with the proceeds helping feed the elk during the brutal Wyoming winter. Goodman reports on the antler search (the Scouts check out the stream beds and ditches) and its attendant hazards (they're wary of "bison crap"). Doolittle's photographs have a summer-camp-bulletin-board quality to them which, when coupled with a zestful spontaneity, seems entirely appropriate. As long as Goodman sticks to the antler auction she has our attention, but she frequently elaborates on related topics and the main story loses a bit of its oomph with each sidetrip. This is reminiscent of McMillan's *Nights of the Pufflings* (BCCB 3/95); here, too, regular kids make their own unique contribution to conservation today, and their peers will find the account both exotic and intriguing. There are both a glossary and suggestions for further reading. SSV

GREGORY, KRISTIANA *The Winter of Red Snow: The Revolutionary War Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart*

See review under Denenberg, p. 13.

GRUNWALD, LISA *Now Soon Later*; illus. by Jane Johnson. Greenwillow, 1996 [24p]  
ISBN 0-688-13946-9 \$15.00 Ad 3-5 yrs

Three-frame, three-sentence spreads trace the routine of a preschool girl whose day is conceptually organized into blocks of present and future activities: "Now it's time to take a nap"—she sulkily pulls up the covers; "SOON you'll be up again"—she puts on her sandals; "LATER you'll go out and see your friends"—she and Mommy visit neighbors. The unnamed narrator who addresses the little girl also, by extension, addresses the listeners who empathize with her. And here lies the problem—whether a child audience can vicariously plug into the girl's unrealistically idyllic family. Daddy goes off to work; Mommy does the housework, takes her daughter to play in the park and with friends, works for awhile at her drafting board, bakes cookies, and serves Perrier at dinner; Daddy does bath and bedtime

tuck-in duty; and the little girl, daintily clad in a sundress, makes it though her day without a smudge. This is '50s fare, self-consciously recast with a work-at-home Mommy and an ethnically diverse neighborhood to play in the '90s. Still, the time concept is clearly presented and the sharply outlined watercolors are attractively uncluttered; even if the particulars don't always ring true, this title may offer some reassuring answers for little ones with that insatiable need to know "What comes next?" EB

HAHN, MARY DOWNING *Following My Own Footsteps*. Clarion, 1996 [192p]  
ISBN 0-395-76477-7 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Gordy is relieved when his mother finally packs up the kids and takes off for her mother's house, leaving his abusive father behind. It's a new life at his grandmother's, and Gordy, who is used to being the tough local bully, has a hard time finding a niche; to his surprise, he gradually becomes friends with William, the overprotected boy next door whose polio has changed his life. Then Gordy's images of soldierly bravery are shattered when his brother Donny comes home bitter and disillusioned from World War II; Donny suggests that their brother Stuart, whose desertion was chronicled in Hahn's *Stepping on the Cracks* (BCCB 12/91), and who is now in the mental ward of a VA hospital, had the right idea. This is a telling and believable portrait of a boy on the cusp of major changes in his life. Though things tie up with excessive speed and ease at the end, Hahn doesn't gloss over the pain of some insoluble problems. Gordy's vacillation between his similarity to his father and his desire to be different from him is strongly drawn, as is the price he must pay for deciding to define manhood on his own terms. Readers who enjoy historical fiction with contemporary immediacy, as well as fans of the first book, will not be disappointed. DS

HALL, DONALD *Old Home Day*; illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Browndeer/Harcourt, 1996 48p

ISBN 0-15-276896-3 \$16.00

Ad 6-8 yrs

As he did in *Ox-Cart Man* (BCCB 2/80), Hall examines the agricultural cycle, this time tracing the growth and demographic changes in Blackwater, a New Hampshire farming community, from its settlement in 1799 through its bicentennial celebration in 1999. The town booms in the heyday of the small farmer, v anes when two wars and urbanization lure younger generations away, and is again poised for revival, as the city-dwelling descendants of the town's founders look for their family roots and greener pastures. There's really no plot here—a fact that would be less a problem had the descriptive details of community development been more compelling. Instead, Hall delivers lists of inhabitants and business owners, folk moving in and folk moving out: "Tom Buzzell came up with his family from Lowell, Massachusetts. . . . He stayed up half the night telling stories with Hamish and Ruth Whittlesaw, who had taken the train all the way from North Carolina." Following the evolution of names over two hundred years provides some interest, as Boswells turn into Bussells and Buswalls, and Wittlesseas become Whittlesaws, but this slender diversion won't rivet listeners for long. McCully provides a lush, nostalgically pastoral backdrop for Hall's litanies; an author's note rambles about New Hampshire town development, but fails to state specifically whether Blackwater is a fictionalized locale. EB

HENKES, KEVIN *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*; written and illus. by Kevin Henkes. Greenwillow, 1996 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12898-X \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12897-1 \$15.00

R\* 5-8 yrs

Lilly, the older sister of *Julius, the Baby of the World* (BCCB 11/90), is in love—with school and, more importantly, with her teacher, Mr. Slinger. The hip Mr. Slinger has charisma from his mustache to his Birkenstocks, and Lilly dreams of being a teacher just like him. One day, however, Lilly's enthusiasm about her new purple plastic purse ("that played a jaunty tune when it was opened") leads her to become disruptive in class; when Mr. Slinger gently curbs her, Lilly's adoration turns to bitterness. She soon regrets her anger, however, and with the help of her family makes up with Mr. Slinger and all is amity again. The intensity of Lilly's relationship with her teacher is absolutely authentic (and it may remind librarians of Ramona's ups and downs with Miss Binney in *Ramona the Pest*), and Henkes keeps the tone light and funny without patronizing any of the players. His mouse characters are, as usual, wittily drawn and endearing, with small touches both humorous (Mr. Slinger reads to the class from *Stuart Little*) and individualizing (Lilly's father is casually clad in a peace-sign sweatshirt as he beams over his "no-frills cheese balls"). His depiction of emotion is particularly deft, with sequential panels showing Lilly's progression from hurt to rage and, later, the literal interpretation of her shrinking self-esteem when the guilt hits her. A stellar saga of love, passion, and irresistible impulses in the kindergarten set, this will strike a purple plastic chord with many young rodents—er, students. DS

HENRY, MARGUERITE *Brown Sunshine of Sawdust Valley*; illus. by Bonnie Shields. Simon, 1996 [96p]

ISBN 0-689-80364-8 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 3-6

Molly is thrilled that her tenth birthday will finally bring the realization of her long-awaited dream: a horse of her own. She's disappointed when Lady Sue, the mare her father buys, turns out to be more for him, but she's overjoyed when Lady Sue surprises the family by giving birth to a baby mule. Molly names the baby Brown Sunshine and spends three years gentling him and training him until finally he becomes a candidate for King Mule in the annual Columbia Mule Day Celebration and parade. It's nice to see a story about one of the lesser-sung equines, and it's also refreshing to see a different kind of event chronicled. This isn't, alas, up to Henry's usual standard: the story moves quickly along the surface without ever getting into the character of Molly or even of Brown Sunshine himself, so that the description of events seems perfunctory; the narrative's inclusion of Molly's diary entry is a rather awkward device, and the interpolation of mule facts through Molly's school report is similarly cumbersome. Young horse fans don't have much fodder these days, but the superficiality of this story may still leave them feeling underfed. DS

HEO, YUMI, ad. *The Green Frogs: A Korean Folktale*; ad. and illus. by Yumi Heo. Houghton, 1996 [32p]

ISBN 0-395-68378-5 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 4-6 yrs

"Long long ago, when tigers still smoked pipes, two green frogs lived with their

mother in a lotus pond. The green frogs loved their mother, but they never obeyed her and always did the opposite of what she told them to do." This situation may sound familiar to species other than green frogs. Children will enjoy the two brothers' tracking their messy breakfast all over the floor, croaking backwards, or engaging in a mighty mud fight. Adults will certainly empathize with mother frog: "All she wanted to do was sit in the tall grass and read her book." Unfortunately these particular youngsters never learn—until their mother grows old and requests burial beside the stream (because she really hopes for a sunny spot on the hill). But for once they obey her and, when a rainstorm threatens to wash her grave away, they cry. They're still crying to this day, and Korean children who don't listen to their mothers are still called green frogs. The first part of the story is funny enough to make the second seem suddenly sad, but the brilliantly cohesive illustrations ease the transition. Appropriate to a water-based story, Heo's art takes on the appearance of amoeba soup, with bits of organic this and that floating across subtly textured backgrounds while the bug-eyed, stick-limbed characters cavort defiantly around their bespectacled mother. In one bedroom scene, a quilt patterned with flies covers up all but the froggies' fingers and toes; minnows swim on the wallpaper; and a rocking-turtle points toward a book titled *F Is for Fly*. Viewers can enjoy these visual jokes while listening to a multicultural frog call variant, not *gribbet* but *GAE GUL!* No specific references are given, but Heo notes having heard the story as a child in Korea. BH

HEST, AMY *Baby Duck and the Bad Eyeglasses*; illus. by Jill Barton. Candlewick, 1996 26p

ISBN 1-56402-680-9 \$16.99

Ad 3-6 yrs

Baby Duck has new eyeglasses, and, upon close examination, decides she does not like them a bit: "Poor, poor Baby, she looks ugly/ In her bad eyeglasses./ Everyone can play but me,/ Poor, poor, poor, poor Baby." Her concerned parents' soothing distractions are ineffectual, but Grampa has more luck, and after some serious hugging and splashing around, Baby decides her new eyeglasses are an asset after all. While Hest's conclusion is contrived and pat, this is an extremely simple story with an extremely simple text that addresses a real issue for young children. Barton's oversized pencil and watercolor illustrations lend a great deal of character to Baby Duck and her relations, her lively expressions and actions drawing the reader (and readee) into this predictable but useful tale. JMD

HINTZ, MARTIN *Farewell, John Barleycorn: Prohibition in the United States*. Lerner, 1996 88p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-8225-1734-5 \$14.21

Ad Gr. 5-8

If the prevailing myth of Prohibition is composed primarily of zealots and crackpots, flappers and gangsters, Hintz goes some distance to dispel this simplistic treatment. Billy Sunday, Carrie Nation, the Fitzgeralds, and Al Capone are all included here, of course, but so is some serious mention of the booze-soaked state of the early nation, the coalition between anti-immigration advocates and Drys, and the alliance of women's suffrage and temperance issues. Missing, though, is equal attention to the need for a sober workforce to staff increasingly industrialized enterprises; although Ford's monetary contributions to the movement are mentioned, the significance of industrialists' support is not. Except for a lively discussion of the love-hate relationship between the public and the new brand of mobsters, a textbook tone pervades the work; many of the sepia period photos are

small and shadowy (but the book will soon fall open on its own to the gory St. Valentine's Day Massacre shot). A bibliography and an index are appended. EB

HODGES, MARGARET *Molly Limbo*; illus. by Elizabeth Miles. Atheneum, 1996 [32p]

ISBN 0-689-80581-0 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 6-9 yrs

With the opening line "There was once a miser named Mr. Means who bought a haunted house," Hodges begins the spooky (but not scary) tale of ghostly Molly Limbo, pirate's wife and housekeeper's friend. Molly haunts Mr. Means' house and helps the housekeeper, Mrs. Handy, keep it neat as a pin. But when the miserly miser decides he doesn't need to pay a live housekeeper when a supernatural, unpaid one will do, he soon learns the error of his ways: "He found rack and ruin in every room of the house. . . . He ran downstairs where words on the floury kitchen floor read NOT FAIR TO MRS. HANDY." Miles' watercolors contain a great deal of involving sensory detail—tattered hangings on the walls, smoke from the fire, steam from the kettle, cobwebs, piles of leather-bound books—and her characters have personality and style, from Mr. Means' wild white hair and spectacles to Mrs. Handy's bright red bun and flapping apron. A variety of perspectives and unusual depth combine with a liveliness of line to make inanimate objects appear inhabited and alive. This original story, based on elements of Scottish folklore, has the ease of an oral tale and will be a popular readaloud and storytelling choice. JMD

HOWARD, ELLEN *The Log Cabin Quilt*; illus. by Ronald Himler. Holiday House, 1996 [32p]

ISBN 0-8234-1247-4 \$15.95

R 6-8 yrs

Pap insisted that many cherished family belongings, particularly those that remind him of his deceased wife, would not make the trip from Carolina to frontier Michigan. Granny, though, was equally determined to bring along her huge sack of quilting scraps, even if she had to perch on it through the entire journey. And it's a good thing, too. Pap is off hunting when the first storm buffets their new cabin. The family can only watch in alarm as the frozen mud falls out of their carefully chinked walls, until young Elvirey gets the notion to stuff Granny's scraps into the cracks. If warmth isn't reward enough, Pap returns and approves of the transformation with a "Your mam would be proud," an "Elvirey, you do beat all!" and a long-absent smile. Elvirey's smooth, unsentimentalized narration is perfectly matched by the sober browns of the full-page watercolors and facing vignettes. Himler resists a flashy visual climax of gaudily striped walls, but rather allows the faded scraps to blend into the wood and make the cabin "downright homey." Pair this with Eve Bunting's *Dandelions* (BCCB 9/95) to compare the rigors of life on different frontiers. EB

HUNTER, ANNE *Possum's Harvest Moon*; written and illus. by Anne Hunter. Houghton, 1996 32p

ISBN 0-395-73575-0 \$14.95

R 4-7 yrs

When Possum sees "the biggest, brightest, yellowest" moon shining down one autumn night, he decorates the grass with lanterns and berries and heads out to invite the mice, the crickets, Raccoon, Rabbit, and other friends to his "Harvest



Soiree." They are all too busy preparing for winter or recuperating from summer to attend his party until, seeing the moon rise high in the sky, they "dream of dancing, of eating and singing" and rush to Possum's party to celebrate. Earthy greens, browns, and blues, textured with extensive crosshatching, provide an effective background against which the moon and fireflies gently glow. The perspective allows the reader to enter more completely into the story; in many illustrations, the reader sees the world as if nestled down in the grass with the animals. Hunter writes with careful simplicity, adding read-aloud interest through alliteration ("Raccoon roused his crony, Rabbit. The crickets invited their cousins the katydid's"), unobtrusive rhyme ("They hurried and scurried while the night was still young"), and attention to detail ("They brought seeds and berries, fiddles and songs"). This is a story suffused with both the excitement and the contentment awakened at the sight of a full, luminous autumn moon. LM

JOHNSTON, TONY *The Ghost of Nicholas Greebe*; illus. by S. D. Schindler. Dial, 1996 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1649-4 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1648-6 \$14.99

R\* 6-9 yrs

See this month's Big Picture, p. 45, for review.

JONES, DIANA WYNNE *The Time of the Ghost*. Greenwillow, 1996 [256p]  
ISBN 0-688-14598-1 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 6-9

The "ghost" floats above people and places she vaguely recalls. She knows she is one of four sisters—Sally, Cart, Fenella, or Imo—but has little notion of what has brought her to her current confused, disembodied state. The sisters seek first to exorcise then to help the spirit, realizing that her plight has something to do with their play-worship of the goddess Monigan, created by Cart over a year ago. An increasingly absorbing, if slow, opening jolts suddenly from past to present as the reader—and Sally—realize that she is the "ghost"; she has been "floating" through the past from her hospital bed in an effort to keep the very real Monigan, made powerful by the girls' veneration, from claiming the life she was promised. Not precisely time-travel and definitely not a ghost story, this is what happens when some fanciful adolescents get together and, quite unintentionally, raise a primordial, bloodthirsty goddess who exists in all times at the same time. Jones' strong visual language and sharply delineated characterizations helps concretize the chain of natural and supernatural events in spite of their unclear chronology. JMD

KARLIN, NURIT *The Fat Cat Sat on the Mat*; written and illus. by Nurit Karlin. HarperCollins, 1996 [32p] (I Can Read Books)

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-026674-0 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-026673-2 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. K-2

The fat cat sat on the mat—the rat's mat, to be exact, and the rat doesn't like it. The rat, a bat, and a hat all try to talk the cat out of sitting on the mat, but he's a stubborn feline and won't budge, not even when tempted with a fish in a dish. In his own sweet time, "he ate the fish, licked the dish, and went back to lie down in the vat. 'Thank goodness!' said the mat." Okay, so "vat" is pushing the concept for the sake of the rhyme scheme, and the talking hat (even with the propeller) is a

little silly, but the kids won't mind. Karlin's watercolors have a James Marshall feel and appeal to them that, along with the rhyming text, carries this slight tale along pretty painlessly. Plot, decent rhythm, and a forward momentum aided by energetic illustrations make this a better-than-average easy reader. JMD

KELLOGG, STEVEN, ad. *I Was Born About 10,000 Years Ago: A Tall Tale*; ad. and illus. by Steven Kellogg. Morrow, 1996 [40p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13412-2 \$15.93  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13411-4 \$16.00  
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

This cheerfully anachronistic tale leapfrogs us through history's greatest hits as the irresistible narrators brag that they were present to see everything from "Adam and Eve driven from the door" to playing "hopscotch with some spacemen on the moon." As Kellogg says in his author's note, telling tall tales means "elasticizing the truth and peppering it with humor," and Kellogg's own additional stanzas are in tune with the zany hyperbolic spirit of this nineteenth-century American folk song. This is serious hilarity perfectly amplified by the uninhibited lunacy of the narrators' myriad claims. The illustrations, in colored inks, watercolors, and acrylics, have sly humor not-so-subtly hidden within (a sign on Columbus's ship: "This voyage is made possible by our royal sponsors Ferd and Iz") and extravagantly displayed without (a deliciously deranged General Hooker battling skeeters). This should work as both a readaloud and a singalong—silliness and utter abandon should be encouraged. Musical notation is included. SSV

KRISHNASWAMI, UMA, ad. *The Broken Tusk: Stories of the Hindu God Ganesha*; illus. by Maniam Selven. Linnet, 1996 [98p]  
ISBN 0-208-02442-5 \$19.95  
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-10

Seventeen tales of Ganesha, elephant-headed Hindu god of new beginnings, son of Parvati and Shiva, are accessibly retold and clearly grounded in their cultural context. The preface discusses Krishnaswami's first exposure, as a child growing up in India, to the oral tales about Ganesha, followed by an introduction to Ganesha and Hindu mythology. Tales include the story of how Ganesha got his elephant's head, why his chosen mount is a tiny mouse, and how he became known as the master of the dance. Ganesha is a round-bellied, jolly sort of god, and his adventures have a cheerful tone that is quite appealing though the stories are most effective when combined with Krishnaswami's notes on their religious significance. This title would be very useful as part of an introduction to Hindu culture and traditions. Source notes are included, as is a pronunciation guide, a list of characters, and a glossary. Color illustrations to come. JMD

LANSKY, BRUCE *You're Invited to Bruce Lansky's Poetry Party!*; illus. by Stephen Carpenter. Meadowbrook/Simon, 1996 84p  
ISBN 0-671-5730-3-9 \$12.00 Ad Gr 3-6

A poetry party combines kids, snacks, and a book of surefire, hilarious poems; Lansky's collection offers fairly edible poetic fare. The poems spring from situations important to elementary kids: school, obnoxious siblings, problem parents. Although Lansky manages neither outrageous lunacy nor linguistic panache, he is at his best with an occasional twist at the end of a poem ("I didn't do my reading./ I watched TV instead—" confesses one poem's narrator who turns out to be not a

student but the teacher) and with the odd and surprising reversals of convention in his nonsense poems ("My favorite food is spinach./ It makes my muscles small./ Each day I'm growing shorter—/ soon I'll be eight feet tall!"). Too many poems are marred by droning singsong, spiritless rhyme and word choice, and uninventive description: "My cat never comes when I call her./ She cannot remember her name./ Her brain is the size of a thimble./ And that's why my cat is so lame." A cartoonish black-and-white line drawing accompanies each poem. Kids may enjoy this fast-food verse that feature teachers juggling meatballs or toes stuck fast in noses—but if you want to host *the* poetry party of the year, be sure to stock up on potato chips and Prelutsky, soda and Silverstein. LM

LASKY, KATHRYN *A Journey to the New World: The Diary of Remember Patience Whipple.*

See review under Denenberg, p. 13.

LAUBER, PATRICIA *Hurricanes: Earth's Mightiest Storms.* Scholastic, 1996 [64p] illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-590-47406-5 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R\* Gr. 3-6

Lauber dives right into her subject in her usual businesslike style—in short order, we are instructed on the whats, whys, wheres, and hows of the monster coastal storms. A profile of a devastating 1938 hurricane in New England, which caught the population unaware and unprepared, sets the stage for a review of modern forecasting methods currently in use. Today's readers will be stunned at the routine damage of hurricanes past—the worst storm disaster in American history was the Galveston hurricane of 1900 in which 6,000 people died. Some of the most destructive storms of recent memory are mentioned (Andrew and Hugo) and Lauber provides us with a rogues' gallery of infamous hurricanes, impressively illustrated with archival photos. In fact, the visual aids themselves pack a wallop: maps, diagrams, historical and space-age photos in a well-designed and attractive format. There are helpful sidebars on weather instruments and the naming of storms. In addition to its alluring depiction of stormy weather, the book closely examines the effect human development has had on the fragile ecology of coastal areas and speculates as to how such encroachment on nature may impede its natural rebirth after a storm. This would fit neatly into a science unit for classrooms as well as standing alone as a compelling read. An index and bibliography are included. SSV

LEVITIN, SONIA *Evil Encounter.* Simon, 1996 249p  
ISBN 0-689-80216-1 \$17.00

M Gr. 6-9

As Michelle Morrow's junior year crumbles under the stresses of her parents' divorce and her own constant bickering with her mother, Sandra, she agrees to give group therapy a try. In no time at all, seductive group-leader Luke has Michelle, along with the rest of her high-strung groupmates, hanging her emotional linen out to air, and he has even pulled Sandra into some of the sessions. But a weekend group outing goes deadly wrong: Michelle flees at night from Luke's insistent offers of drugs and sex, only to discover the next morning that Luke has been murdered and Sandra is the prime suspect. With an abrupt shift of gears, the story now swings from psychodrama to whodunnit as Michelle and her ever-patient almost-boyfriend Ray grab some books on criminology and show the local police force how to get to the bottom of the mystery. Levitin fails to provide compelling

reasons for intelligent, emotionally guarded Michelle's swift and total embrace of the group's silly machinations ("Breakthrough. Then came the tears, the confessions, the explanations, cries. Afterward Luke played the music celebration: 'Staying alive! Ah-ah-ah-ah, staying alive!"). Michelle and Ray's subsequent foray into detection, à la Nancy Drew and Ned Nickerson, is equally facile: "She turned and grinned at Ray. 'Don't you love being a detective?' He clasped her hand. 'I love being with you.'" Revelations concerning Luke's deviousness and charlatanism come as no shock to readers, who will be from the start more leery than Michelle is of "doctor" Luke's disco therapy. EB

LEWIN, BETSY *Chubbo's Pool*; illus. by Betsy Lewin. Clarion, 1996 [32p]  
ISBN 0-395-72807-X \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 6-9 yrs

Let's face it. Chubbo is a pool hog. And there is little the zebras and warthogs, baboons and elephants can do but leave, when this belligerent hippopotamus bellows, "GET OUT OF MY POOL!" The hot sun soon dries up Chubbo's private party, however, and he lumbers over to the next watering hole, only to find all the animals peacefully sharing the water and himself an uninvited guest. While based on the author's observation of a real hippo in the Okavango Delta in Botswana, the story strays into *Lion King* Africa when the elephants, sensing Chubbo's self-reproach and loneliness, thunder off to Chubbo's mud wallow with their trunks full of water, and Chubbo's pool becomes the oasis of biodiversity it was meant to be. Lewin's watercolors, sun-bleached yellows, browns, and greens, evoke the heat and humidity of an African delta. However, the realistic wildlife illustrations (an "Animal Glossary" appears on the last page, denoting both common and scientific names of all the animals) camouflage what is a human, rather than hippo, story: be nice and share with your friends. Despite the book's anthropomorphic angle on the behavior of African fauna, the precision of Lewin's word choice ("The elephants fled, ears out, tails up, and still thirsty") and the intensity of Chubbo's refrain make this an exuberant read-aloud for potential pool hogs everywhere. AEB

MACDONALD, AMY *No More Nice!*; illus. by Cat Bowman Smith. Kroupa/Orchard, 1996 123p

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08892-8 \$15.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09542-8 \$14.95

Ad Gr. 4-6

Simon Maxwell, almost eleven, is sent to vacation with his Great Aunt Mattie and his Great Uncle Philbert by default: his parents' unexpected business trips and unwelcome houseguests leave nowhere else for him to go. Simon learns how to spit flamboyantly from his uncle ("Now then, my boy, can you spit?" Simon shook his head. "Well, I'll be pickled. I really will. You poor neglected child") and to cuss colorfully from his aunt ("Mangy, muculent misfits"). After two weeks in this loving, freewheeling household Simon goes home, handily implementing all that he's learned from Mattie and Philbert, resulting in detention, a fight with a bully (he wins with spit and creative cuss words), and houseguests who think he's remarkably rude. MacDonald has more than one opportunity to make this book just too precious for words, but she never goes quite that far. Pen-and-ink drawings throughout contribute to the old-fashioned, somewhat nostalgic tone of the text, but Simon carries his story sturdily as he goes from well-behaved and repressed to somewhat rambunctious and certainly more outspoken. Character-

izations are amusing and concise, with secondary characters identifying themselves as stuffy, self-absorbed, and uncreative by their own words and actions. A too-tidy conclusion is still satisfying, because Simon is a good kid and you want him to be happy. JMD

**McMILLAN, BRUCE** *Jelly Beans for Sale*; written and illus. with photographs by Bruce McMillan. Scholastic, 1996 32p  
ISBN 0-590-86584-6 \$15.95 Ad Gr. 1-3

No fusty old lemonade stands for these young entrepreneurs—they're hawking gourmet jelly beans, a penny apiece. A full-page photo of a penny, nickel, dime, and quarter and their respective values kick off the sale, followed by facing spreads which feature a close up of each transaction and another satisfied customer. The point here, of course, is learning to count money; left-hand views show the buyer's hand proffering a combination of coins, and the amount is expressed below in a boxed equation (e.g., "1c + 1c + 1c + 1c + 1c + 5c = 10 jelly beans," for five pennies and a nickel). The math is clearly and consistently presented, and several coin combinations for various amounts are demonstrated. Photos of the money exchange, however, are deeply shadowed, and coins and jelly beans become increasingly difficult to count as amounts increase. Likewise, jelly-bean borders and images of the happy patrons are cast in more somber tones than one would expect for so bright a subject. A color-flavor chart, jelly-bean trivia, and (for teachers who have exhausted *McM Math?*) information on how to obtain Jelly Belly classroom materials are included. EB

**McNEAL, TOM** *The Dog Who Lost His Bob*; by Tom and Laura McNeal; illus. by John Sandford. Whitman, 1996 [32p]  
ISBN 0-8075-1662-7 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Phil is a lost, dirty, blue-stained (yes, blue) dog. He runs away from his Sunday morning bath and embarks on a journey that is filled with bow-wow woes and that ends six months later, on another Sunday morning. Readers will be rooting for Phil as he attempts to find Bob, his owner. All the doggone things that could happen do: nasty kids, scavenging dogs, careening buses, and lousy weather. Text and watercolor/pencil illustrations successfully collaborate to capture the excitement and pathos of the gangly dog's plight. Particularly striking is the use of the blue palette which serves to unify the exaggerated proportions and shifts of viewpoint. The story's perceptive glimpses into how Phil "thinks" when he's lost will be recognizable to humans who've been on the other side of that canine situation. The sheer doggy joy when Phil hears Bob's voice on his rescuer's answering machine is palpable ("Phil wagged his nubby tail like anything and tried to smell his Bob inside the machine"). This is a tale for anyone (and their dog) who's been lost. PM

**MICHELSON, RICHARD** *Animals That Ought to Be: Poems about Imaginary Pets*; illus. by Leonard Baskin. Simon, 1996 [32p]  
ISBN 0-689-80635-3 \$16.00  
Reviewed from galleys Ad 6-9 yrs

Hypothetical animals are always good poetic fodder, and here Michelson limns in verse the merits of the Nightnoise Gladiator, the Talkback Bat, the Channel

Changer, the Leftover Eater, and eight others. His creatures are inventive and their characteristics sometimes amusingly fitting (The "I'm-All-Ears" "snacks on whispers. I can't stop her./ She's part gossip, part eavesdropper"). Unfortunately, the scansion is continually faulty, making reading frustrating; the poetic forms, which employ either ballad meter or tetrameter couplets throughout, become repetitive; and some of the syntax is forced ("That's why I thank my lucky star/ that animals are who they are"). Baskin's watercolor portraits of the poetic subjects have a luminescent reality that makes them plausible as well as fantastic; their emphasis on glowing eyes and gaping mouths gives them a slightly sinister resonance. With its elegant, airy format and the poem and watercolor portraiture, the book is visually reminiscent of Douglas Florian's *On the Wing* (BCCB 4/96) and *beast feast* (8/94); the poetry here isn't up to that standard, but readers drawn by the concept will enjoy a trip through this eccentric zoo. DS

MOTHER GOOSE *Humpty Dumpty and Other Nursery Rhymes*; ISBN 0-525-45675-9; *Jack and Jill and Other Nursery Rhymes*; ISBN 0-525-45676-7. Each book: illus. by Lucy Cousins. Dutton, 1996 14p \$5.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 1-4 yrs

"Sing a song of sixpence" or sing any of the other verses offered in this series of nursery rhyme board books. Cousins' simple, uncluttered forms and clear, contrasting colors, together with her use of small, repeated figures (such as all the king's men and horses) reflect the lively, to-the-point nature of the verses in a way that more typical sentimental pastel illustrations fail to do. She does provide a touch of the old-fashioned in the long, unfrilled coats and dresses worn by some figures and in her rendering of shoes, but the boldness of the illustrations gives them a contemporary feel: yes, the king presented with a blackbird pie may wear the traditional golden crown, but his toothy grin and triumphantly raised spoon and the blackbirds rioting across the two-page spread are some distance from nostalgic illustration. The usual Mother Goose suspects—Old King Cole, the cow that jumped over the moon—are here, but Cousins also includes a few lesser-known verses like "Grandfa' Grig had a pig" and "Cobbler, cobbler, mend my shoe." Careful: this Mother Goose is so energetic it just might shove its competitors right off the nursery bookshelf. LM

NEENAN, COLIN *Live a Little*. Harcourt, 1996 252p

Trade ed. ISBN 0-15-201242-7 \$12.00

Paper ed. ISBN 0-15-20124305 \$6.00

Ad Gr. 7-12

Hale is beginning to realize just what kind of changes the end of senior year will bring, but he's allowed no time for quiet reflection: his moony best friend, Sonny, and his lab partner, Zoe, whom he secretly loves, take him on an emotional roller-coaster ride. First, a mission to spy on Sonny's ex-girlfriend and her new boyfriend nearly gets the three would-be agents killed; then Zoe's increasing emotionality and changes in behavior lead Hale to think that she is suffering from a terrible affliction. It's hard to gauge the tone here, since pranks and portentousness get treated in the same way, and the characterizations are more gimmicky than convincing, though the *dramatis personae* are often authentically irritating. The energy is high throughout, however, the style easy and conversational, and the intrusion of plausible real-life danger into the mundane high-school milieu is convincingly handled (although most readers will figure out Zoe's problem chapters

before Hale does). This glib but enjoyable saga will appeal to teens looking for something lighter than Cormier or Crutcher. DS

O'CONNOR, BARBARA *The Soldier's Voice: The Story of Ernie Pyle*. Carolrhoda, 1996 80p illus. with photographs  
ISBN 0-87614-942-5 \$16.13 Ad Gr. 6-8

In this brief biography O'Connor gives a focused picture of a unique man's life and work. From Pyle's first "real" newspaper job in LaPorte, Indiana, to his final job on a Pacific Island during World War II, O'Connor includes a sense of the man as a three-dimensional personality, no mean feat given the brevity of the text and the simplicity of her approach. She does not shirk the more sensational aspects of Pyle's life—excessive use of alcohol, his troubled marriage—but puts them in perspective in relation to Pyle's career and world events. Most of the appeal here is the inclusion of quotes from Pyle's personal letters and his newspaper columns which lend an immediacy and personality to the otherwise bland text. An easy if not outstanding design makes this an interesting, accessible work. The quality of the black-and-white photos is uneven, but this is apparently a problem with the originals, not a production flaw. Specific citations are not included, although there is a statement that all quotes are from materials listed in the bibliography; notes and an index are also appended. JMD

ORMEROD, JAN *Ms. MacDonald Has a Class*; written and illus. by Jan Ormerod. Clarion, 1996 [26p]  
ISBN 0-395-77611-2 \$15.95  
Reviewed from galleys Ad 3-5 yrs

Inspired by their field trip to the farm, the ambitious Ms. MacDonald and her preschool class prepare a play to be performed for their families. Their exuberant activities—building scenery, painting masks and costumes, practicing animal sounds and movements—are captured in vigorous watercolors that spread across clean white space. Lines of music winding through the text, a familiar meter, and of course the tip-off EIEIOs will have listeners aching to join in, except for the single but significant obstacle—it's just too hard. The length and detail of the play preparations are evidently too overwhelming for a single cumulative scheme; the first half of the text features a cumulative pattern, while the second half abandons the effort entirely. Moreover, Ormerod has transmuted the simple, singable repetition of Old MacDonald's "oink oink here" into mouthfuls such as "With a pigpen here and a hay bale there,/ Here a bucket, 'Where's your boots?' everywhere a chick chick," likely to stifle even the most resolute chorus. Preschoolers should enjoy watching their fictional peers put on the show; just don't expect much audience participation. EB

PATENT, DOROTHY HINSHAW *Children Save the Rain Forest*; illus. with photographs by Dan L. Perlman. Cobblehill, 1996 44p  
ISBN 0-525-65163-2 \$15.99 R Gr. 5-7

This is an elegantly concise explanation of what a tropical rain forest is and why it's important. Using as her example the Bosque Eterno de Los Niños (International Children's Rain Forest) in Costa Rica, Patent engagingly describes the animals and plants to be found there. She points out that many of today's medicines are derived from plants found in rain forests, the birds we love to hear sing in our

backyards often winter there, and destruction of rain forests leads to the overheating of the earth known as the "greenhouse effect." The book touches on the intangible or spiritual effects, too ("Every loss of part of the natural world is a loss to humanity as well"). The distinguishing mark of this title, however, is the emphasis given to the contributions of kids from around the world who are actually helping to save this rain forest: "All it takes is a good idea and plenty of hard work." Patent makes her points neatly albeit sometimes rather breathlessly; we learn, for instance, that tiny Costa Rica (the size of Vermont plus New Hampshire) has "more bird species than in all of North America north of Mexico." The narrative is brisk, and most spreads are illustrated by crisp photographs. In addition to a couple of maps, there is a glossary and index. SSV

PETERS, JULIE ANNE *How Do You Spell Geek?* Little, 1996 139p  
ISBN 0-316-70266-8 \$12.95

R Gr. 5-7

Ann and her best friend Kimberly both desperately want to make it to the National Spelling Bee, but Kimberly's desire, fueled by her parents' pressure, borders on obsession and begins to crowd out the rest of her life, including her friendship with Ann. When Ann is assigned to help out a geeky new student, Lurlene, tensions increase; when Ann begins genuinely to like Lurlene and also discovers that she is a gifted enough speller to be competition, the rift between the friends seems unbreachable. This follows some fairly traditional patterns of the middle-school friendship story, but it's well-paced and energetic. The characters are nicely individuated, with Lurlene's cheerfulness and natural smarts quite plausible. The book also takes a different (and probably more authentic) tack from many in allowing the remaking of Lurlene's appearance to help her social status considerably; while it's clear that judging people entirely on their outsides is a bad idea, there's also no suggestion that the changing of that outside is a yielding of individuality ("You degeeked me," says Lurlene happily). This is a satisfying entry on the perennially popular topic of not-so-perennial popularity. DS

PFEFFER, WENDY *Polar Bears*. Silver, 1996 [32p] illus. with photographs (Creatures in White)

Library ed. ISBN 0-382-39327-9 \$14.95

Paper ed. ISBN 0-382-39326-0 \$5.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs

Lavishly illustrated with oversized photos, this book is a sunny tribute to the world's largest land-dwelling carnivore—the polar bear. Solid bits of information ("By midwinter the she-bear, that weighs about 700 pounds, gives birth to two cubs. Each cub weighs about one pound—less than you weighed when you were born!") ground this fictionalized account of a year in the life of a she-bear, a year in which she gives birth and begins to teach her two offspring to fend for themselves. The pictorial invitation to revel in the wildlife has its drawbacks: one particularly jarring juxtaposition couples an adorable ringed seal staring full-faced at the camera with copy on the following page stating that "the cubs get their first taste of seal." Nor is there any comment on the encroachment of man into the bears' native habitat. The book is ultimately not very deep, but it's got enough natural history to keep it from being merely very pretty. The ending features a spread of "Bear Facts" and a global map showing the native habitat of the species. SSV



PHILIP, NEIL, ad. *Odin's Family: Myths of the Vikings*; illus. by Maryclare Foa. Orchard, 1996 [124p]  
 ISBN 0-531-09531-2 \$19.95  
 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-6

Without oversimplifying, Philip tells the stories of the origin of the gods and frost giants, how Odin got his wisdom, the death of Baldur, the coming of Ragnarok, and eleven other Norse myths. What distinguishes Philip's anthology is its design: large print, a generous amount of white space, and full-page color art make this an eminently accessible, easily promoted collection. Foa's oil paintings (with a preponderance of red, gold and blue) have a primitive vigor that, while not necessarily finished and fine, suits the nature of these somewhat ruthlessly unforgiving myths. Philip includes a who's who (with pronunciation guide), an afterword that discusses the origin and history of Viking myth and legend, suggested readings for children and adults, and a brief list of sources. JMD

PINKWATER, DANIEL *Wallpaper from Space*; illus. by Jill Pinkwater. Atheneum, 1996 [32p]  
 ISBN 0-689-80764-3 \$15.00  
 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 2-4

Steve is glum about his mother's proposed redecorations, especially when it seems unlikely that he'll get the wallpaper of his choice ("Steve, they just don't make wallpaper with people getting eaten. It isn't a popular choice"). He's won over by wallpaper with glow-in-the-dark spaceships, which that night pulls him into its drama: mouse spacemen whipping through black holes, singing heroic songs (mostly about Steve), and searching for gumballs. None of this makes a hole—er, whole lot of sense even in the book, and the old dream ending is well-segued but disappointing after the inventive adventure. This has an accurate boyishness, however, with its loopy space-themed happenings, that young readers will appreciate. Jill Pinkwater's art has a marker-in-fist hardiness with its primary-color palette and simple lines, while droll, thematically appropriate decorations surround the page numbers. This will make an enjoyable fast read or perhaps even an offbeat bedtime serial; it'll certainly up the demand for astronomical wallpaper. DS

POYDAR, NANCY *Cool Ali*; written and illus. by Nancy Poydar. McElderry, 1996 [32p]  
 ISBN 0-689-80755-4 \$13.00  
 Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-7 yrs

What's a big-city kid who loves to draw supposed to do on a smotheringly hot day? Ali takes her chalks outside and draws flowers, beach umbrellas, and snowflakes on the sidewalk and the front of the apartment building. Faster than you can say, "It's not the heat, it's the humidity," neighbor Mrs. Frye is splashing her feet in a blue chalk puddle and Mr. Boyle's teeth are chattering at the force of Ali's North Wind. Do Ali's drawings actually cool down the scene or does she just have imaginative neighbors? Poydar's refusal to answer this question gives the book a certain whimsy, as does her depiction of Ali's drawings which are rough-textured, like chalk on concrete, and convincingly childlike. Despite proper accoutrements (sunhats, sandals, newspaper fans) and colors (yellows and tans predominate), the soft, smeary watercolors convey more a sense of gentle warmth than of stifling heat. When a

cool rain washes away her pictures (and undermines the story's conceit by bringing in weather unrelated to Ali's drawings), her neighbors cheer her with a hoisting onto their shoulders and a *Rocky*-esque chant of "Ali! Ali!" Though the language occasionally veers too close to slickness ("But the crowd noticed Ali, whose drawing beat the heat") and the ending is somewhat anti-climactic, playful puns (Ira Baker, Mr. Boyle), rhymes ("My, my, sighed Mrs. Frye"), and alliteration ("[rain] pinged on the porches . . . and hissed off the hot sidewalk") help keep the story light. This may inspire young chalkmeisters to decorate the neighborhood in their own attempt to meddle with the seasons. LM

SAINT JAMES, SYNTHIA *Sunday*; written and illus. by Synthia Saint James. Whitman, 1996 32p  
ISBN 0-8075-7658-1 \$15.95 M 3-6 yrs

In stilted, awkward language, Saint James walks the reader through the chronology of events of an African-American family's Sunday ("Sunday morning, sleeping late; pancakes piled high. Reading the paper, dressing in our Sunday best, walking together to church"). After church where "we listen to our preacher's sermon. Joyful voices sing!" there is a subway ride to Grandma's for supper, as "Sunday is for family!" Saint James' bold geometrics and vivid colors aren't enough to create interest in what is essentially a list of activities with no connecting narrative. Her faceless figures, which worked so well in the monumental myth figures of *Tukama Tootles the Flute* (BCCB 4/95), work against the individualization of her characters. While the colorful graphics and strong compositions reflect capable drafting skills, the lack of narrative momentum is definitely problematic. JMD

SAN SOUCI, ROBERT D. *The Red Heels*; illus. by Gary Kelley. Dial, 1996 [32p]  
Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1134-4 \$15.89  
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1133-6 \$15.99 Ad Gr. 6-10

Lost in the woods, colonial cobbler Jonathan Dowse stumbles on a cottage inhabited by the mysterious and lovely Rebecca Wyse. He offers to mend her shoes in exchange for food and shelter. She gives him a pair of shoes with red heels—the sign of a witch—and the smitten but frightened Jonathan repairs them. Later, the spying Jonathan finds Rebecca dancing in the red-heeled shoes upon the surface of a silver pond and joins her, dancing through the sky "and across the roofs of farmhouses and townhouses, where goodmen and goodwives slept snug in their beds." Returning to his calling and his craft, he regretfully leaves her. All ends happily, however, when he makes himself a pair of dancing shoes, marries Rebecca, and spends life happily cobbling, raising children, and dancing in the moonlit sky. San Souci imposes the structure of traditional legend onto this original story, but betrays the integrity of the form with a tacked-on "happily ever after" conclusion. Kelley's pastels capture the smoky, spooky feeling of a New England witch tale, the red heels glowing in the subdued, autumnal palette, but the effective visual elements make the disparate story elements even more jarring in comparison. Given the setting and time period, the plot simply does not ring true: a woman whose "witchcraft" apparently consists only of the ability to dance through the night sky is willing to give up her powers for love, but does not have to do so because the colonial New Englander enamored of her embraces her "magic" and joins in the dance. This is witchcraft tamed, without consequence or sacrifice, and the result is an anti-climactic conclusion that is ultimately unsatisfying. JMD

SATEREN, SHELLEY SWANSON *The Humane Societies: A Voice for the Animals*. Dillon, 1996 [80p] illus. with photographs

Library ed. ISBN 0-87518-622-X \$14.95

Paper ed. ISBN 0-382-39309-0 \$7.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-9

The United States has several thousand animal shelters that handle millions of animals a year; this book explains how these shelters came to be, what their philosophies are, and what they do. Sateren first describes the difference between animal-rights organizations, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and animal-welfare organizations such as animal shelters, then explains that there are national organizations and independent local shelters, which usually have no connection with each other. She examines both traditional shelter tasks (animal control, rehoming, and euthanasia) and outreach duties (abuse and neglect investigation, humane education, pet therapy, etc.). The book addresses the issue of euthanasia squarely and discusses factors (such as the failure to spay or neuter animals, the impulsive acquisition of a pet, and pet-store puppy mills) contributing to the overpopulation problem that makes the killing of unwanted animals necessary. There are unfortunately no notes, and Sateren's contentions are sometimes broad or vague; nor does she acknowledge the controversy surrounding some aspects of her subject, especially the work of the Humane Society of the United States. It's still a useful and intelligent examination of a topic dear to many young readers' hearts (although a note explaining how they can become involved would have been welcome), and the color photographs are well chosen and placed to keep the topic concrete. A list of addresses, a glossary, and an index are included. DS

SERFOZO, MARY *What's What?: A Guessing Game*; illus. by Keiko Narahashi. McElderry, 1996 [32p]

ISBN 0-689-80653-1 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 3-5 yrs

A plain white page with a small watercolor detail poses the bold typed question, "What's hard?" The answer's on the verso: "A sidewalk is hard/ as a rock or a wall./ So look out where you fall!" and we learn that the detail is, in fact, a piece of a rocky wall near the pavement on which a young rollerblader has taken a spill under the concerned eye of his little sister. "What's long?" Could be a rope, but the verso discloses the children's toy train on its long track. Hard and soft, wet and dry, cold and warm, long and short, dark and light are illuminated with gentle, hazy watercolor scenes of two African-American siblings at play and at rest, and three-line verses that are at once concise and elegant. For the big finish Serfozo challenges listeners to consider what can possess all of these contradictory qualities at once and makes a convincing case for the children's frisky puppy. By offering more than one possible answer to her riddles, Serfozo encourages readers and listeners alike to posit their own solutions. EB

SIMON, SEYMOUR *The Heart: Our Circulatory System*. Morrow, 1996 [32p] illus. with photographs

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-11408-3 \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-11407-5 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-5

The hard-working engine of the circulatory system—the heart—gets no relief. It

pumps the blood through sixty thousand miles of blood vessels in each and every human. Simon walks us through the circulatory blueprint in his usual informative and accessible style, but it is the startling photographs which command attention. Seen through a scanning electron microscope (SEM) and colored by computer, many of the images are magnified millions of times over—what looks like a shower of molten meteorites, for instance, is actually red blood cells hurtling at the viewer. In addition to the photos, there are cross-section diagrams of the heart, veins, and arteries (kids may find confusing the medical convention of showing the right side of something—atrium, ventricle—on the left side of the page). Especially useful in this day of frequent cardiac treatments is a brief explanation of what can go wrong with a heart and what can be done to fix it. Flap copy indicates that this initiates a series Simon will do on the human body; this first one has heart. SSV

SIROF, HARRIET *Bring Back Yesterday*. Atheneum, 1996 [176p]  
ISBN 0-689-80638-8 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

When a plane crash takes the lives of her mother and father, Lisa is devastated. Now living with her strongminded and offbeat Aunt Alice, she finds herself slipping back in time to Elizabethan England. There she teams up with Rowena, whose determination to act leads her to disguise herself and Lisa as boys and get them jobs in the theater, and who, as Rooji, had been Lisa's beloved imaginary playmate in early childhood. There's a lot going on here, what with Lisa's time travel, her present tragedy, her growing friendship with a boy her age who lost his brother in the same plane crash, and her aunt's growing activism for air safety that leads to her trial for civil disobedience; unfortunately it doesn't knit together very well. Lisa's trips to—imaginings of?—the past are often more involved than interesting, and they detract from the drama of her present anguish rather than informing it. At the heart, however, there is a telling picture of a girl struggling to face unbearable loss, and that's the story young readers will appreciate. DS

SMALL, DAVID *Fenwick's Suit*; written and illus. by David Small. Farrar, 1996 34p  
ISBN 0-374-32298-8 \$15.00

R Gr. 3-6

What can you do about a yellow and red plaid three-piece suit that takes over your life? In this slapstick comedy the clothes don't make the man, the clothes nearly do the man in. Fenwick, the local office nerd, is dissatisfied ("I don't have any friends. Maybe it's the way I'm dressed"). Thus Small takes us on an improbable, hilarious escapade with Fenwick and his garish new ensemble. Sharp, exaggerated angles, a few bony felines, and the suit's sophisticated strut through bustling cityscapes capture the flamboyant spirit of the story, while mottled tones provide appropriate background for the garment, itself swathed in a pristine white aura. The cartoonish art agreeably matches the fast-paced text, which leads readers into a fantastic adventure when Fenwick's threads become combative, inflate like a hot-air balloon, and tuck Fenwick in their pocket ("How humiliating! My clothes are wearing me!" he exclaimed). The caper literally unravels, concluding Fenwick's humorous exploits—or perhaps not concluding them ("Maybe it's the way I wear my hair, he told himself"). This is a story which could engender some lively discussions on what does make a man (or woman), and it's tailor-made for laughs. PM

SOTO, GARY *Off and Running*; illus. by Eric Velasquez. Delacorte, 1996 [144p]  
ISBN 0-385-32181-3 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-6

For those bored with the usual election-year shenanigans, here's an alternative: Miata Ramirez (Soto's *The Skirt*, BCCB 10/92) and Rudy Herrera (*The Pool Party*) square off in their *own* contest—for school president. Fifth-grader Miata decides to “do something big”; her platform promises a school beautification project, computers, and class trips, but Rudy tempts the fickle electorate with promises of longer recesses and ice cream every day. Worried that her politics of substance will be crushed by Rudy's pork, Miata goes right to the top, writing to the *real* president for political advice (“Could you tell us something about winning? We need help”). Spunky Miata could help even the White House—we never doubt that she'll triumph. When she does, however, the victory rings hollow; Rudy and his running mate give the deciding votes to the girls so they, the boys, can play on the school soccer team. What's the unintentional message here—that the girls can win only when the boys throw the election? Soft pencil drawings by Velasquez are stiffly posed but show an appealing group of Latino kids. SSV

STAPLES, SUZANNE FISHER *Dangerous Skies*. Farrar, 1996 232p  
ISBN 0-374-31694-5 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 7-10

Buck and Tunes are both twelve, and they've been best friends for years; it remains to be seen, in this little corner of the Chesapeake Bay, how long that can last when he's white and male and she's black and female. When Buck finds the body of Jorge Rodrigues, who managed the teams of local laborers, he and Tunes suspect fair-seeming but foul-tempered Jumbo Rawlin from the start; Jumbo, however, tells a smooth story that makes Tunes the prime suspect in Jorge's murder. As Buck tries to exonerate his friend, he runs up against the deep unstated prejudice that makes a white man's word worth more than a black girl's, and he begins to understand the reality of his world. While there are some compelling undercurrents here, the book's pacing is slow and uneven, and the children's accurate knowledge of the murderer's (rather predictable) identity adds emotional momentum at the expense of credibility. Staples depicts the sea and salt-soaked world of the bay vividly, however, and the bitterness of Buck's growing awareness and the far-from-triumphant ending gives the book a tang of truth. DS

STEVENSON, JAMES *The Oldest Elf*; written and illus. by James Stevenson. Greenwillow, 1996 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13756-3 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13755-5 \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

It's just before Christmas at the North Pole and Santa's elves are turning out today's favorite toys—video games, helicopters, fire engines, racing cars, dolls—all equipped to make loud beeps, whines, screeches, and wails. Fresh batteries are the coin of the realm, with Santa himself passing them out. But in the quiet cellar below, where the calendar is stuck at 1984, the forgotten yet faithful Elwyn makes the same toys he's made forever—wooden boats, cars, planes, blocks, puppets, rocking horses—without a battery or flashing light among them. To be sure, the plot's predictable and the tone sentimental, but that doesn't stanch the flood of satisfaction we feel when Elwyn and Blitzen (who's been retired in favor of a young thing,

Josephine) take off on their own to deliver the old-fashioned presents. Stevenson's trademark pen-and-watercolor artwork washes over the bewildered expressions of Elwyn and the determined look of Blitzen, lending both characters a cheerful homeliness. This will make a merry addition to any holiday collection. SSV

TAURI, NANCY *The Brass Ring*; written and illus. by Nancy Tauri. Greenwillow, 1996 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-14169-2 \$15.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-14168-4 \$16.00

M 3-6 yrs

The "when I was little, now I am big" concept is a sure bet for the preschool crowd and this is another attempt to illuminate that childhood rite of passage. The young girl of the story takes a beachfront vacation and revels in her bigness. Both big readers and little listeners, however, will be wondering where the brass ring of the title is. Not until the story is nearly over do we find out the significance of the brass ring of the Flying Horse Carousel in Watch Hill, R.I. (according to CIP notes), when it makes a brief two-page appearance giving our heroine her reward ("YES! I've won another ride!"). Those unfamiliar with the idea of grabbing a brass ring on a carousel to win a free ride may still be confused since she isn't holding the ring in the last double-page spread. The art captures the glad adventures of the child in a stylized way: watercolor and colored-pencil figures finely lined in black ink often appear awkwardly drafted, and the fairground colors are disappointingly muted. There are two stories here—"once I was little, now I'm big" and "the brass ring on the carousel"—and only one book. PM

TOMEY, INGRID *The Queen of Dreamland*. Atheneum, 1996 [184p]

ISBN 0-689-80458-X \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

Julie is surprised, on her fourteenth birthday, to get a mysterious note inviting her to Dreamland to have her palm read; when she succumbs to curiosity and follows up on the note, she finds that its writer is the woman who gave Julie up for adoption at birth. Julie, frustrated with her parents' upright and stodgy home, enjoys Loretta's careless warmth and energetic approach to life, she revels in her relationship with Loretta's fragile son Bagley, and she's determined to unravel some of the secrets that have plagued her childhood. The writing here is smooth and lively and the book deals honestly with some adoption issues: Julie is authentically angry about how much of her past has been hidden from her and how rosy the scenario of her surrender has been painted, and her ambivalence is credible. The characterization is a bit stock, however, and the realistic plot jars uneasily with some more soap-opera-ish elements: Bagley, paralyzed in early childhood, needs money for an operation that will allow him to walk again; Loretta was paid off by Julie's parents to stay out of Julie's life. This is a flawed but entertaining fantasy of a hidden life that should appeal to many young readers who fear—or hope for—such secrets of their own. DS

TRUMBLE, KELLY *Cat Mummies*; illus. by Laszlo Kubinyi. Clarion, 1996 [56p]

ISBN 0-395-68707-1 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Cat mummies . . . thousands and thousands of them . . . what kid could resist? Opening with the discovery in 1888 of thousands of cat mummies buried in the

Egyptian desert, Trumble proceeds to give a lively explanation of Egyptian religion, reincarnation, mummification processes, and the rise and fall of the Egyptian Empire, relating complex ideas in a cogent text. Chapters describing cat worship, the rise of the city of Bubastis, and Egypt's conquest by Persia are followed by an appendix that includes information on human mummification, a list of animals and the gods they symbolized, a timeline of Egyptian history, a list of museums that have animal mummies "in stock," brief chapter notes, and a glossary of names and terms. Kubinyi's watercolors (single and half-page illustrations, with a sprinkling of double-page spreads) add to an already intriguing text, his clear, unmuddy palette effectively reflecting the clarity of desert light. Design and layout are attractively handled with large-point text and generous white borders. Although the text is occasionally sweeping ("All along the Nile people revered cats, ibises, hawks, beetles and other animals"), it provides a window into the day-to-day activities of an ancient culture in such a way as to interest readers in additional reading and research. There is an index and a bibliography. JMD

VIESTI, JOE *Celebrate! In South Asia*; written by Joe Viesti and Diane Hall; illus. with photographs by Joe Viesti. Lothrop, 1996 [32p]  
 Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13775-X \$15.93  
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13774-1 \$16.00  
 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

*Celebrate! In Southeast Asia*; written by Joe Viesti and Diane Hall; illus. with photographs by Joe Viesti. Lothrop, 1996 [32p]  
 Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13489-0 \$15.93  
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13488-2 \$16.00  
 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

In these photoessays on holidays and celebrations in Asia, Viesti's color photographs are brilliant and involving, featuring all kinds of ceremonial dress, pomp, and circumstance, from gaily draped elephants to henna-tattooed women to colorfully costumed revelers engaged in (for the most part) unexplained ritual activities. While the holidays and celebrations presented are unusual (not many children's books have information on the Surin Elephant Round-Up or the Esala Perahera, a Sri Lankan celebration in honor of one of Buddha's teeth), the limited text and lack of tables of contents and indices make the facts frustratingly difficult to access and utilize. The introductory paragraph to each title is the same except for the substitution of South Asia for Southeast Asia in the text, and this apparently easy culture-swap is indicative of these titles' somewhat generic approach to their topic. JMD

WAITE, MICHAEL P. *Jojoфу*; illus. by Yoriko Ito. Lothrop, 1996 [32p]  
 Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13661-3 \$15.93  
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13660-5 \$16.00  
 Reviewed from galleys R 5-8 yrs

Jojoфу, meaning "heroine," is a white dog owned by a young hunter named Takumi. When Takumi sets out for the mountains with ten of his strongest dogs, it is Jojoфу who saves him from an avalanche by leading him away from the hillside, Jojoфу who saves him from plummeting over a cliff in the impenetrable fog. Therefore, when an enraged Jojoфу appears ready to attack her master, Takumi trusts to her judgment and is vindicated when his beloved friend pounces on a huge snake

lurking just behind him. It's a satisfying story of canine heroism (although one feels a bit sorry for the lesser dogs lost to the avalanche and over the cliff); a source note describes the tale's origin as the Ima Mukashi scrolls, but there's no information about the translation or any intermediate versions. The illustrations play on the scroll idea, unrolling the story at the beginning and rolling it back up at the end. The draftsmanship, with its simplicity and tendency towards stiffness, is often reminiscent of scrollwork, but in other spreads Ito's exploration of dark and light shadings gives the scenes appropriate drama; Jojofu herself is an engaging prick-eared presence, whose shining white coat distinguishes her visually from the rest of the pack. We've had a fair amount of cat stories from across the globe; here's a noble-dog saga that gives the worthy canine equal time. DS

WINTER, JEANETTE *Josefina*; written and illus. by Jeanette Winter. Harcourt, 1996 36p

ISBN 0-15-201091-2 \$15.00

R\* 4-8 yrs

Josefina (a character based loosely on Mexican folk artist Josefina Aguilar) creates her family and her world in tandem, one from flesh-and-blood, the other from reddish-brown clay. Her hands have molded clay figures since she was a child, and she continues to work as her family expands to include nine children, who then help her paint the fired clay: cool turquoises, deep violets, slate blues, warm pinks. For Josefina, art is not something separate from life: she rises before dawn to sculpt the sun ("*un sol*"), flowers bloom in the sunshine and she creates "four women to sell the blossoms" ("*cuatro vendedoras de flores*"), and she feeds her child while making "six babies for six mamas to hold" ("*seis madres y seis bebés*"). The use of folk-art perspective further emphasizes the synchronicity of creator and creation; a tiny Josefina dances in a clay landscape as effortlessly as her plump creations mingle among her children. While technically this can be seen as a semi-bilingual counting book, it is the story that demands attention. Numbers and Spanish phrases serve only as unobtrusive headings for framed illustrations, while the text emphasizes Josefina's actions, emotions, and the passing of time. With *Josefina*, Winter has sculpted a joyful portrait of a Mexican woman and folk artist's life. ¡Viva arte! AEB

WOLF, JAKE *Daddy, Could I Have an Elephant?*; illus. by Marilyn Hafner. Greenwillow, 1996 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-13295-2 \$14.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-13294-4 \$15.00

R 4-7 yrs

Daddy hasn't even rolled out of bed in the morning, and already Tony has launched his crusade: "Daddy, I need a pet." As his father attempts to get the day under control, Tony first proposes an elephant; Daddy's Socratic questioning leads Tony to recognize the impossibility of his suggestion and to counter with a pony, a python, a flock of sheep, etc. By the time Tony lands on the idea of a puppy, Daddy is sufficiently softened up to agree . . . or just maybe Daddy knew what he was doing all along. Tony's loony pet fantasies come to life in Hafner's meticulously detailed line-and-watercolor pictures, in which the wildlife make themselves comfy in the apartment—a sheep greets bleary-eyed Daddy with a tray of breakfast and a cheery "Rise and Shine!" and a pelican lolls in bed with a boombox, a can of sardines, and a volume entitled *Poisson Complet*. Solid as the pet story may be, it's just as much fun to watch (put that gender indignation on hold) the Big Guy and the Little Guy doing their guy things. EB



WORMSER, RICHARD *American Childhoods: Three Centuries of Youth at Risk*. Walker, 1996 135p illus. with photographs

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8427-5 \$17.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8426-7 \$16.95

Ad Gr. 6-9

Disputing the myth of "the good old days," Wormser examines the historical hardships of childhood, focusing on topics such as Crime and Punishment, Dying Young, Warrior Children, Sex and Romance, and Working Days. Drawing on personal accounts and specific incidents, he pays particularly close attention to those groups that fared least well—immigrants, minorities, and the poor—and finishes each chapter with an extensive discussion of the contemporary situation. The emphasis on the anecdotes makes the understanding more immediate but the conclusions questionable, particularly as there is no supporting information for sweeping statements such as "It is no wonder that many children died from the cures rather than the diseases" (is it really clear what the children died of?) or "The gangs were as violent as any of those roaming city streets today" (how do the numbers stack up?). When statistics are provided they're often not the ones we're interested in: it's less relevant what percentage of mill-workers were children than what percentage of children were mill-workers, and it's similarly difficult to discern the typicality of many other problems the book addresses. It's still a useful antidote to sunny histories and historical fictions, as well as to yearning for mythological easy times. A chapter-by-chapter bibliography is appended, but source notes for quotes and assertions are not provided; black-and-white photographs appear throughout. DS

WYNNE-JONES, TIM *The Maestro*. Kroupa/Orchard, 1996 231p

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08894-4 \$17.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-09544-4 \$16.95

R Gr. 7-12

Burl Crow is fourteen, and he's had a lifetime of abuse from his brutal father and indifference from his tranquilized and passive mother. He finally flees his father's rage and seeks shelter, after a night of cold and hunger, at a cabin on the distant edge of a lake. The cabin is inhabited by Nathaniel Gow, a Glenn Gould-esque pianist, composer, and eccentric genius, who is conflicted between his need for solitude and his wish to help Burl, and who finally returns to Toronto leaving Burl amply supplied in the cabin. When Burl receives the news that Gow has died, he is desperate to make a safe place for himself. This leads him to attempt to claim himself as Gow's illegitimate son and the heir to the cabin, then to a mission to save Gow's last brilliant work-in-progress from oblivion, and finally to a showdown with his bitter father. Wynne-Jones blends his plot elements seamlessly, keeping the tone low-key and descriptive and never slackening his steady pace (though the ending ties things up a bit too neatly). Burl's mixture of bewilderment and determination is believable, and the details of rural Ontario life, where everyone's familiar with marauding bears and depends on the doughty little local train, enrich the book and enhance the drama. Wynne-Jones has displayed a knack for the unusual made credible in his short-story collections (*Some of the Kinder Planets*, BCCB 5/95, *The Book of Changes*, 10/95); it's nice to see that skill expanded into a well-crafted and accessible novel. DS



## PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

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Carle, Eric. *The Art of Eric Carle*; illustrated by Eric Carle and with photographs. Philomel, 1996. [125p] ISBN 0-399-22937. \$35.00. Reviewed from galleys.

This is really both a textual and visual anthology: in addition to Carle's autobiographical chapter and the text of his 1990 speech at the Library of Congress, chapters include accolades from Ann Beneduce (Carle's U.S. editor) and from Dr. Viktor Christen (Carle's German editor). A photoessay on the artist's collage technique rubs shoulders with a forty-page gallery of his illustrations over the last quarter of a century, which precedes a look at some of his quick sketches and an illustrated bibliography of his oeuvre. The book's inviting layout may appeal to artistic youngsters as well as grown Carle fans, and the information about his working process, particularly the technical details, is absorbing. The organization seems a little random (though they're interesting, it's not clear why Carle's 1977 zoo sketches are even in the work) and results in some redundancy (we hear a few anecdotes several times over). Still, it's an open and inviting account of one of children's literature's most popular artists. An index of persons and titles mentioned is included. DS

Cohen, Morton N. *Lewis Carroll: A Biography*. Knopf, 1995. ISBN 0-679-42298-6. \$35.00. 577p.

Old-fashioned without being stodgy, this is a comprehensive account of the life, or perhaps one should say the lives, of Lewis Carroll and Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. Cohen shifts between the chronological and the thematic approaches, pausing in Dodgson's middle years, for instance, to devote chapters to his character, his faith, and other matters; the effect is pleasantly meandering, as the book places the thorough examination of myriad facets of Dodgson's life above the progress of time. The result is a particularly strong evocation of both the Oxford milieu and the layers of connections between Dodgson and the great, the soon-to-be-great, and the parents of the great. Quotes from and inclusion of original material, such as Dodgson's diaries and his letters, give an intimacy to the biography and help expand the analysis of Dodgson's relationship with his child-friends. The style, especially in the areas of conjecture about events and character, occasionally leans toward the fulsome, and some of the sweeping statements are eminently challengeable ("The *Alice* books affect all children of all places at all times in a similar way"). Overall, however, the extensive research, the atmosphere, and the detail (we learn not only about Dodgson's later years, but about Alice's) will engage fans of Carroll as well as those with a taste for literary history. DS

## SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

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Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

Adoption-fiction: Tomey  
 Africa-stories: Lewin  
 African Americans-fiction: Staples  
 African Americans-stories: Saint James; Serfozo  
 American Indians-fiction: Durrant  
 Animal welfare: Sateren  
 Arctic: Pfeffer  
 Art and artists-stories: Barrows; Poydar; Winter  
 Asian Americans-fiction: Balgassi  
 Astronauts-stories: Gaffney  
 Babies-stories: Cottringer  
 Bats: Arnold  
 Bees: Cole  
 BIOGRAPHIES: Aaseng; O'Connor  
 Biology: Simon  
 Carousels-stories: Tafuri  
 Cats: Trumble  
 Cats-stories: Karlin  
 Child abuse-fiction: Hahn; Staples; Wynne-Jones  
 Christmas-stories: Stevenson  
 Civil War-fiction: Denenberg  
 Clothes-stories: Ericsson; Small  
 Colonial life-fiction: Gregory; Lasky; San Souci  
 Community history-stories: Hall  
 CONCEPT BOOKS: Carlstrom; Grunwald; McMillan; Serfozo; Winter  
 Costa Rica: Patent

COUNTING BOOKS:  
 Carlstrom; McMillan; Winter  
 Crime and criminals-fiction: Calvert  
 Crusades-fiction: Bradford  
 Death-fiction: Sirof; Wynne-Jones  
 Divorce-fiction: Danziger  
 Doctors-fiction: DeFelice  
 Dogs-stories: McNeal; Waite  
 Ducks-stories: Hest  
 Ecology: Gay; Goodman; Patent  
 Egypt: Trumble  
 Ethics and values: Staples  
 FANTASY: Conrad; Creech; Jones; Pinkwater; Sirof  
 Fathers and daughters-fiction: Calvert  
 Fathers and daughters-stories: Barrows  
 Fathers and sons-fiction: Hahn; Wynne-Jones  
 Fathers and sons-stories: Wolf  
 Fish-stories: Frieden  
 FOLKTALES AND FAIRYTALES: Dematons; Heo  
 Foxes: Arnold  
 Friends-fiction: Giff; Neenan; Peters; Staples  
 Frogs-stories: Heo  
 FUNNY STORIES: Clements; Franklin; MacDonald  
 Genetics: Aaseng  
 Ghosts-fiction: Creech

Ghosts—stories: Duquennoy;  
     Hodges; Johnston  
 Grandfathers—stories: Gaffney;  
     Hest  
 Grandmothers—stories: Ericsson  
 Growing up—fiction: Staples  
 Growing up—stories: Tafuri  
 Hippopotamuses—stories: Lewin  
**HISTORICAL FICTION:**  
     Bradford; DeFelice; Denenberg;  
     Gregory; Hahn; Lasky  
**History, medieval:** Bradford  
**History, U.S.:** Hintz; Wormser  
 Holidays: Bernhard; Viesti  
 Horses—fiction: Henry  
 Hurricanes: Lauber  
 India—folklore: Krishnaswami  
 Japan—stories: Waite  
 Korea—fiction: Balgassi  
 Latinos—fiction: Soto  
 Libraries: Cummins  
 Lions—stories: Cottringer  
 Mexico—stories: Gollub; Winter  
 Money: McMillan  
 Moon—stories: Gaffney; Hunter  
 Mothers and daughters—fiction:  
     Conrad; Danziger; Levitin;  
     Tomey  
 Mothers and daughters—stories:  
     Best; Ericsson  
 Mothers and sons—fiction:  
     Franklin; Hahn; Pinkwater  
 Mules—fiction: Henry  
 Mummies: Trumble  
 Music and musicians—fiction:  
     Wynne-Jones  
**MYSTERIES:** Levitin  
**MYTHS AND LEGENDS:**  
     Krishnaswami; Philip  
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     Brandenburg; Cole; Goodman;  
     Pfeffer  
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 Pioneer life—stories: Howard  
 Plays—stories: Ormerod  
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     Michelson  
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Prohibition: Hintz  
 Racism—fiction: Staples  
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 Rats—stories: Karlin  
**Reading aloud:** Karlin; Krishnaswami;  
     Lansky; Philip; San Souci; Small;  
     Winter  
**Reading, beginning:** Karlin  
**Reading, easy:** Giff; MacDonald  
 School—fiction: Clements; Danziger;  
     Franklin; Neenan; Peters; Soto  
 School—stories: Fain; Henkes; Ormerod  
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 Sisters—fiction: Jones  
 Snakes—stories: Gollub  
**Sociology:** Wormser  
 Stepfamilies—stories: Best  
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     Krishnaswami; Philip; San Souci  
**Storytime:** Archambault; Cottringer;  
     Ericsson; Gaffney; Hest; Hunter;  
     Ormerod; Poydar; Small; Tafuri;  
     Winter; Wolf  
**TALL TALES:** Kellogg  
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 Teenage pregnancy—fiction: Neenan  
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**Transportation:** Curlee  
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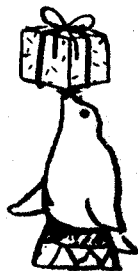
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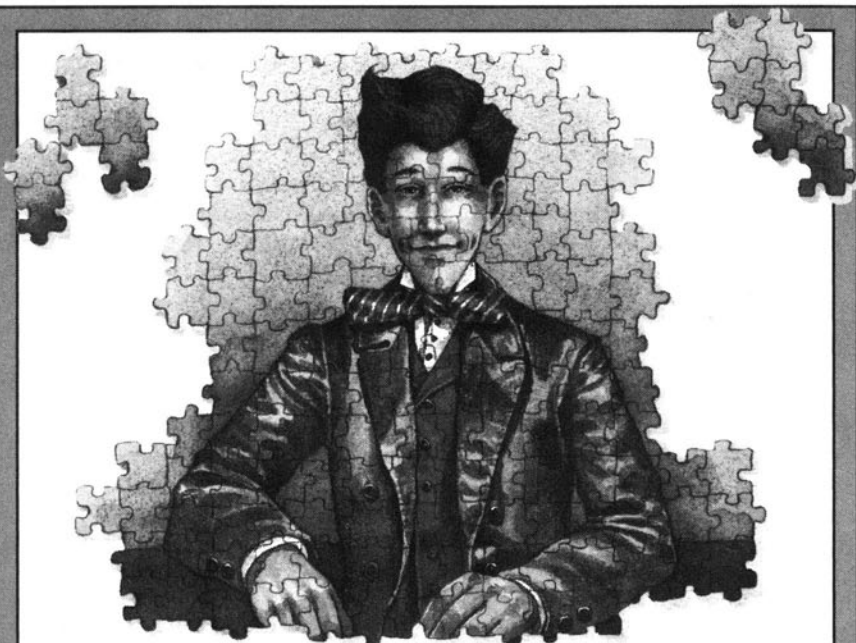
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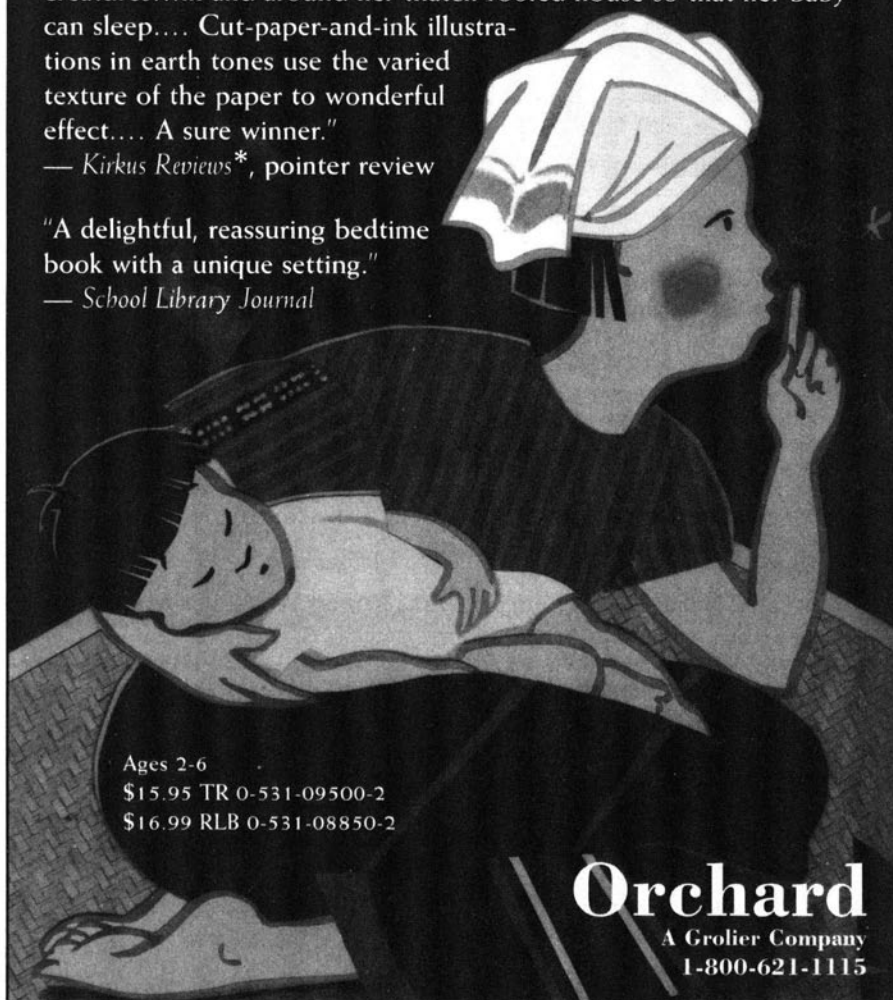
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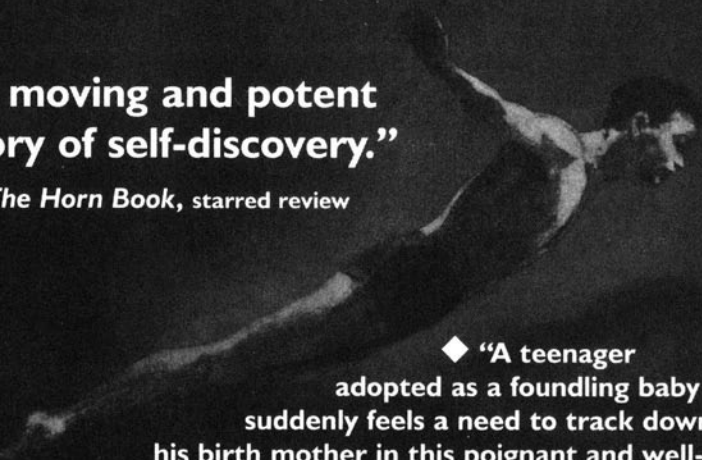


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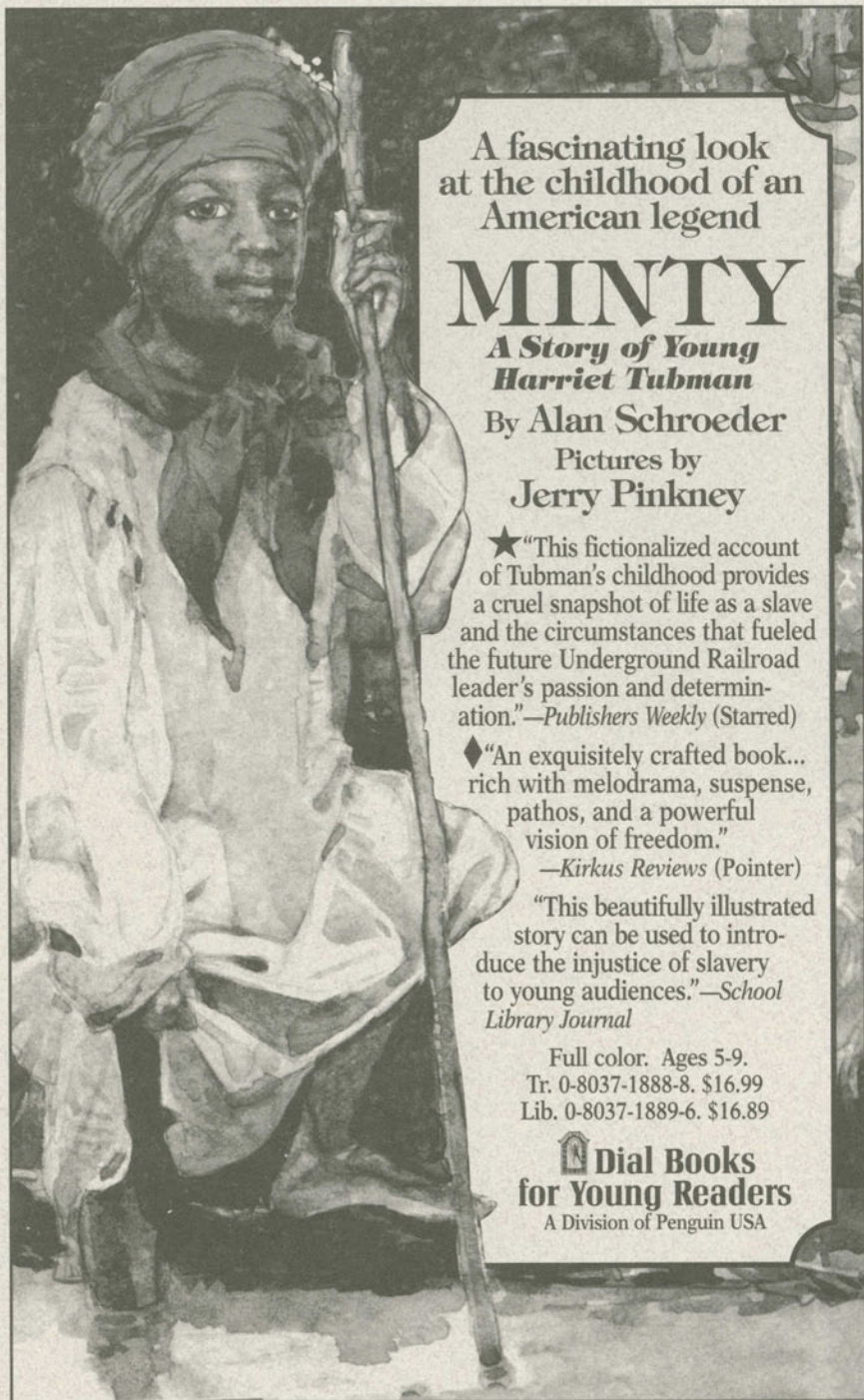
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